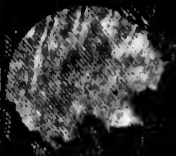


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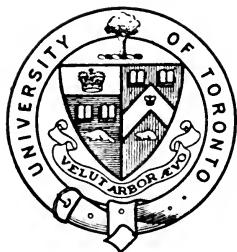


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PELLEAS AND MELISANDA

AND

THE SIGHTLESS.

* * FOR FULL LIST OF THE VOLUMES IN THIS SERIES,
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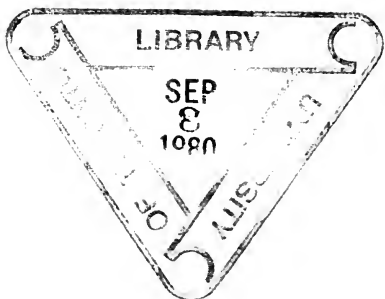
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PELLEAS AND MELISANDA, 
AND

THE SIGHTLESS
TWO PLAYS BY
MAURICE MAETERLINCK.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY LAURENCE ALMA TADEMA



THE WALTER SCOTT PUBLISHING CO., LTD.
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1895





TO THE READER.

The following translations were undertaken for a twofold reason, and that a selfish one: because it is joy to live awhile very close to the thought of another, when that other is a light-giver: because it is joy to place within the reach of certain of one's fellows what one believes to be admirable and good.

Yet, in offering to those who have not read the original, an English version of two of Maurice Maeterlinck's plays, I feel as one that, having marvelled at a rose in the garden, should poorly fashion its image in paper to give to his friend. —I should have preferred to place the volume in your hands without so much as a word of apology for its many obvious and more or less inevitable shortcomings; but the laws of the "Scott Library" forbid the silence I desire, and oblige me to add a few prefatory words.

TO THE READER.

Maurice Maeterlinck was born at Ghent on August 29th, 1862; his published works are as follows:—

SERRES CHAUDES (*a small volume of verse*),
1889.

LA PRINCESSE MALEINE (*a prose drama in five acts*), 1890.

LES AVEUGLES (*two prose dramas in one act, entitled respectively "L'INTRUSE" and "LES AVEUGLES"*), 1890.

L'ORNEMENT DES NOCES SPIRITUELLES (*translated from the Flemish of Van Ruysbroeck, and preceded by an Introduction*), 1891.

LES SEPT PRINCESSES (*a prose drama in one act*), 1891.

PELLÉAS ET MÉLISANDE (*a prose drama in five acts*), 1892.

ALLADINE ET PALOMIDES: INTERIEUR: LA MORT DE TINTAGILES (*three short prose dramas published in the same volume*), 1894.

LES DISCIPLES À SAÏS ET LES FRAGMENTS DE NOVALIS (*translated from the German and preceded by an Introduction*), 1895.

A translation of one of the masterpieces of

TO THE READER.

English literature should perhaps be added to this list; a tragedy of John Ford's, adapted for representation by the "Théâtre de l'Œuvre" last winter, under the title of "Annabella."

As regards the future, we may expect in the autumn of this year a new volume, entitled "Le Trésor des Humbles."

Beyond this, it seems to me that nothing need be said. The bulk of Maurice Maeterlinck's work has been written in prose, but he is pre-eminently a poet, one who—profoundly conscious of life's mystery—seeks to draw near the unapproached, to see the unseen, to hear the unheard, to express the inexpressible.—If full and fair judgment of a poet's work depended on the intelligence merely, it might be profitable for one who knew it well to take it carefully to pieces, to consider the beauties and the blemishes of its workmanship, and, clearly ascertaining the cause of every effect, thus help others to a rightful understanding of the whole. But a poet is, of all men, he that draws nearest to the soul of things; and in seeking to understand

TO THE READER.

what concerns the soul, nothing avails but the soul itself.

We live within the shadow of a veil that no man's hand can lift. Some are born near it, as it were, and pass their lives striving to peer through its web, catching now and again visions of inexplicable things; but some of us live so far from the veil that we not only deny its existence, but delight in mocking those that perceive what we cannot.—And yet we know and acknowledge that our perceptions of things material and positive are bounded by the nature of our senses.—If you and I were standing on a height together, we both should be able to realise that the grass was dewy at our feet, that the wind blew from the west, that the sky above us was cloudless and serene. Yet, beyond the village in the valley, it might chance that you saw nothing clearly, neither the silver river, nor the spire half-way up the hill, nor the misty peaks beyond. And whilst I stood gazing at what for you existed not, the passing swallow's highest note, the shrill cry of the grasshopper, a hundred

TO THE READER.

insect-voices at our feet, might reach your ears and never pierce my silence. Nor, if we spent the whole day there, seeking to share perceptions, should I be able to make you see, nor you to make me hear, beyond the limits of our senses.

The soul has senses as the body has; and it seems to me that the work of a poet—so he walk hand in hand with truth, revealing unto us as best he may the face she shows him—asks to be accepted or rejected in silence. For the nearer he stand to the veil, the keener his ears to catch life's whispers, and the more vibrating his sensibility to the analogies that bind together the seen and the unseen, the more impossible it must become to weigh the value of what he gives us, since the only proof of its truth is the comprehension—here or there, partial or entire—of some similar or kindred soul.

It has been affirmed in print, by one possibly unconscious of his own malformation, that Maurice Maeterlinck is a hopeless mental cripple; it has also been written that a certain work of his is a masterpiece pure and eternal, sufficient of

TO THE READER.

itself to immortalise his name, a name that must ever be blessed by those that hunger after what is great and beautiful.

Both critics were eminent, and sincere.

I should like to add that the song in Act I.1. of "Pelleas and Melisanda" has been inserted at the author's request instead of that which appeared in the original.

I should also like to remind you once again that what you have before you is merely a paper flower without perfume. I only hope that it may lead you to delight in that of which the following pages are so poor a counterfeit.

Pelleas and Melisanda.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Act I.

Persons.

ARKËL, *King of Allemonde.*

GENEVIEVE, *Mother of Pelleas and Golaud.*

PELLEAS, }
GOLAUD, } *Grandsons of Arkël.*

MELISANDA.

LITTLE YNIOLD, *Son of Golaud by a previous
marriage.*

A DOCTOR.

THE DOOR-KEEPER.

MAID-SERVANTS, BEGGARS, ETC.

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

The Castle Door.

THE MAID-SERVANTS [*within*].

Open the door! Open the door!

THE DOOR-KEEPER [*within*].

Who is there? Why have you come and waked me? Out by the little doors, out by the little doors; there are enough of them! . . .

A SERVANT [*within*].

We have come to wash the door-stone, the door and the steps; open! open!

ANOTHER SERVANT [*within*].

There are to be great doings!

THIRD SERVANT [*within*].

There are to be great merry-makings! Open quickly! . . .

ALL THE SERVANTS.

Open! open!

THE DOOR-KEEPER.

Wait! wait! I don't know that I shall be able to open the door . . . It never is opened . . . Wait until daylight comes . . .

FIRST SERVANT.

It is light enough outside; I can see the sun through the chinks . . .

THE DOOR-KEEPER.

Here are the big keys . . . Oh! oh! how they grate, the bolts and the locks! . . . Help me! help me!

ALL THE SERVANTS.

We are pulling, we are pulling . . .

SECOND SERVANT.

It will not open . . .

Sc. i. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

FIRST SERVANT.

Ah! ah! It is opening! It is opening slowly!

THE DOOR-KEEPER.

How it creaks! It will wake the whole house . . .

SECOND SERVANT [*appearing on the threshold*].

Oh! how light it is already out of doors!

FIRST SERVANT.

The sun is rising on the sea!

THE DOOR-KEEPER.

It is open . . . It is wide open! . . .

[*All the Maid-servants appear on the threshold, which they cross.*]

FIRST SERVANT.

I shall begin by washing the door-stone.

SECOND SERVANT.

We shall never be able to clean all this.

OTHER SERVANTS.

Bring water! bring water!

THE DOOR-KEEPER.

Yes, yes; pour water, pour water, pour out all the waters of the flood; you will never be able to do it . . .

SCENE II.

A Forest.

[*MELISANDA is discovered
beside a spring.
Enter GOLAUD.*]

GOLAUD.

I shall never find my way out of the forest again. Heaven knows where that beast has led me. I thought I had wounded it to death; and here are traces of blood. Yet now I have lost sight of it; I think I am lost myself—and my dogs cannot find me. I shall retrace my

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

steps . . .—I think I hear some one crying . . .
Oh! oh! what is that at the water's edge? . . .
A little maid weeping at the water's edge?
[*He coughs.*] She seems not to hear me. I
cannot see her face. [*He draws nearer and
touches MELISANDA on the shoulder.*] Why are
you crying? [MELISANDA *starts and prepares
to run away.*] Fear nothing. You have nothing
to fear. Why are you crying here, all alone?

MELISANDA.

Do not touch me! do not touch me!

GOLAUD.

Fear nothing . . . I shall not do you . . .
Oh! you are beautiful!

MELISANDA.

Do not touch me! do not touch me! or I
shall throw myself into the water! . . .

GOLAUD.

I am not touching you . . . See, I shall stand

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act i.

here, right against the tree. You must not be afraid. Has some one hurt you?

MELISANDA.

Oh! yes! yes! yes!

[She sobs profoundly.]

GOLAUD.

Who was it that hurt you?

MELISANDA.

All of them! all of them!

GOLAUD.

How did they hurt you?

MELISANDA.

I will not tell! I cannot tell!

GOLAUD.

Come; you must not cry so. Where have you come from?

MELISANDA.

I ran away! I ran away!

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

GOLAUD.

Yes; but from where did you run away?

MELISANDA.

I am lost! . . . lost! . . . Oh! lost here . . .
I don't belong here . . . I was not born
there . . .

GOLAUD.

Where do you come from? Where were you
born?

MELISANDA.

Oh! oh! far from here . . . far . . . far . . .

GOLAUD.

What is it that shines so at the bottom of the
water?

MELISANDA.

Where?—Ah! that is the crown he gave me.
It fell in crying . . .

GOLAUD.

A crown?—Who gave you a crown?—I will
try to reach it . . .

MELISANDA.

No, no; I don't want it! I don't want it! . . .
I had sooner die . . . die at once . . .

GOLAUD.

I could easily take it out. The water is not
very deep.

MELISANDA.

I don't want it! If you take it out, I shall
throw myself in instead! . . .

GOLAUD.

No, no; I shall leave it there. It could be
reached without trouble, however. It seems to
be a very fine crown.—Is it long since you ran
away?

MELISANDA.

Yes, yes . . . Who are you?

GOLAUD.

I am the Prince Golaud—grandson of Arkël,
the old King of Allemonde . . .

MELISANDA.

Oh! you have got grey hairs already . . .

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

GOLAUD.

Yes ; a few, here, at the temples . . .

MELISANDA.

And your beard too . . . Why are you looking
at me in that way?

GOLAUD.

I am looking at your eyes. Do you never
close your eyes?

MELISANDA.

Yes, yes ; I close them at night . . .

GOLAUD.

Why do you look so astonished?

MELISANDA.

Are you a giant?

GOLAUD.

I am a man like other men . . .

MELISANDA.

Why did you come here?

GOLAUD.

I don't know myself. I was hunting in the forest. I was pursuing a boar. I missed my way.—You look very young. How old are you?

MELISANDA.

I am beginning to feel cold . . .

GOLAUD.

Will you come with me?

MELISANDA.

No, no; I shall stay here . . .

GOLAUD.

You cannot stay here all alone. You cannot stay here all night . . . What is your name?

MELISANDA.

Melisanda.

GOLAUD.

You will be afraid, all alone. One cannot tell what there may be here . . . all night . . . all alone . . . it is not possible. Melisanda, come, give me your hand . . .

Sc. iii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

MELISANDA.

Oh! do not touch me! . . .

GOLAUD.

You must not cry out . . . I shall not touch you again. Only come with me. The night will be very dark and very cold. Come with me . . .

MELISANDA.

Which way are you going?

GOLAUD.

I don't know . . . I too am lost . . .

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

A Hall in the Castle.

[ARKËL and GENEVIEVE
are discovered.]

GENEVIEVE.

This is what he writes to his brother Pelleas :

—“One evening, I found her all in tears beside a spring, in the forest where I had lost my way. I neither know her age, nor who she is, nor whence she comes, and I dare not question her, for she must have had some great fright; and whenever she is asked what happened, she bursts out crying like a child, and sobs so profoundly that one is afraid. Just as I came upon her beside the spring, a golden crown had slipped from her hair and had fallen into the depths of the water. She was, moreover, dressed like a princess, although her garments had been torn in the briars. It is now six months since I married her, and I know no more than on the day of our meeting. Meantime, my dear Pelleas, you whom I love more than a brother, although we were not born of the same father; meantime, prepare my return . . . I know that my mother will gladly forgive me. But I fear the king, our venerable grandfather; I fear Arkël, in spite of all his kindness, for I have disappointed by this strange

Sc. iii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

marriage, all his political schemes, and I fear that Melisanda's beauty, in his wise eyes, will not excuse my folly. If he consent, however, to welcome her as he would welcome his own daughter, on the third evening after the receipt of this letter, light a lamp at the top of the tower overlooking the sea. I shall perceive it from the deck of our ship; if not, I shall go further, and never return . . ." What do you say to this?

ARKËL.

Nothing. He has done what he probably had to do. I am very old, and yet I have never for one instant seen clearly within myself; how then would you have me judge the deeds of others? I am not far from the grave, and I am incapable of judging myself . . . One is always mistaken unless one shuts one's eyes. What he has done may seem strange to us; and that is all. He is more than ripe in years, and he has married himself, as a boy might do, to

a little girl whom he found by a spring . . . This may appear strange to us, because we can only see the wrong side of destinies . . . the wrong side even of our own . . . He had always followed my advice hitherto; I thought to make him happy in sending him to ask for the Princess Ursula's hand . . . He never could bear solitude, and since his wife's death he had grieved to be alone; this marriage would have put an end to long wars and to ancient enmities . . . He has not willed it so. Let it be as he has willed. I have never put myself in the way of a destiny; and he knows his own future better than I do. There is no such thing, perhaps, as the occurrence of purposeless events . . .

GENEVIEVE.

He has always been so prudent, so grave, and so firm . . . If it were Pelleas I should understand . . . But he . . . at his age . . . Whom is he going to bring into our midst? A

Sc. iii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

stranger picked up by the road-side . . . Since his wife's death he lived but for his son, little Yniold, and if he was about to remarry, it was because you had wished it . . . And now . . . a little girl in the forest . . . He has forgotten all . . . What are we to do?

[*Enter* PELLEAS.]

ARKËL.

Who is that coming in?

GENEVIEVE.

It is Pelleas. He has been crying.

ARKËL.

Is that you, Pelleas? Come a little nearer, that I may see you in the light . . .

PELLEAS.

Grandfather, I received another letter at the same time as my brother's; a letter from my friend Marcellus. He is dying, and he calls for me. He wishes to see me before he dies . . .

ARKEL.

You wish to leave before your brother's return?—Your friend is perhaps less ill than he supposes . . .

PELLEAS.

His letter is so sad that death is visible between the lines . . . He says that he knows precisely the day that death must come . . . He says that I can outstrip it if I will, but that there is no time to lose. The journey is very long, and if I await Golaud's return it may be too late . . .

ARKËL.

It would be well to wait awhile, nevertheless. We cannot tell what this home-coming prepares for us. And besides is not your father here, overhead, more dangerously ill, perhaps, than your friend . . . Are you able to choose between father and friend . . .?

[*Exit.*]

Sc. iv. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

GENEVIEVE.

Be sure to light the lamp this very evening,
Pelleas . . .

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE IV.

Before the Castle.

[*Enter GENEVIEVE and
MELISANDA.*]

MELISANDA.

It is dusky in the gardens. And what big
forests, what big forests all around round the
palace! . . .

GENEVIEVE.

Yes; it astonished me too when I first came
here, and it astonishes everybody. There are
places where one never sees the sun. But one so
soon becomes accustomed to it all . . . It is

long ago, it is long ago . . . It is nearly forty years since I came to live here . . . Look the other way, you will have the light of the sea . . .

MELISANDA.

I hear a noise below . . .

GENEVIEVE.

Yes; some one is coming up towards us . . . Ah! it is Pelleas . . . he still seems weary of having waited for you so long . . .

MELISANDA.

He has not seen us yet.

GENEVIEVE.

I think he has seen us, but he does not quite know what to do . . . Pelleas, Pelleas, is that you?

PELLEAS.

Yes! . . . I was coming towards the sea . . .

GENEVIEVE.

So were we; we were in search of brightness.

Sc. iv. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

Here it is a little brighter than elsewhere; and yet the sea is gloomy.

PELLEAS.

We shall have a storm to-night. There has been one every night for some time, and yet how calm it is now . . . One might put forth in ignorance, never to return.

MELISANDA.

Something is leaving the harbour . . .

PELLEAS.

It must be a big ship . . . Her lights are very high, we shall see her presently when she sails into that band of light . . .

GENEVIEVE.

I don't know that we shall be able to see her . . . there is still a mist on the sea . . .

PELLEAS.

It seems as if the mist were slowly rising . . .

MELISANDA.

Yes; I see a little light over there that I did not see before . . .

PELLEAS.

It is a beacon; there are others that we cannot yet see.

MELISANDA.

The ship is in the light . . . She is already far away . . .

PELLEAS.

It is a foreign ship. She seems to me larger than any of ours . . .

MELISANDA.

It is the ship that brought me here! . . .

PELLEAS.

She is going at full sail . . .

MELISANDA.

It is the ship that brought me here. She has big sails . . . I know her by her sails . . .

Sc. iv. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

PELLEAS.

She will have a bad sea to-night . . .

MELISANDA.

Why is she leaving to-night? . . . One can hardly see her now . . . She will be wrecked perhaps . . .

PELLEAS.

Night is falling very fast . . .

[*Silence.*]

GENEVIEVE.

Is no one going to speak any more? . . . Have you nothing more to say to one another? . . . It is time to go in. Pelleas, show the way to Melisanda. I must go and see little Yniold a moment.

[*Exit.*]

PELLEAS.

There is nothing to be seen now on the sea . . .

MELISANDA.

I see other lights.

PELLEAS.

Those are the other beacons . . . Do you hear the sea? . . . It is the wind rising . . . Let us go down this way. Will you give me your hand?

MELISANDA.

You see, my hands are full . . .

PELLEAS.

I will hold you by the arm, the path is steep, and it is very dark . . . I am perhaps going away to-morrow . . .

MELISANDA.

Oh! . . . Why are you going?

[*Exeunt.*]

Act II.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A Spring in the Park.

[*Enter PELLEAS and
MELISANDA.*]

PELLEAS.

You don't know where I have brought you? I often come and sit here towards noon, when it is too hot in the gardens. The air is stifling to-day, even in the shadow of the trees.

MELISANDA.

Oh! the water is clear . . .

PELLEAS.

And cool as winter. It is an old deserted spring. It was once, they say, a miraculous

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act ii.

spring,—it opened the eyes of the blind,—it is still called “blindman’s well.”

MELISANDA.

Does it open the eyes of the blind no more?

PELLEAS.

Now that the king himself is nearly blind, no one comes to it . . .

MELISANDA.

How lonely it is here! . . . There is no sound to be heard.

PELLEAS.

There is always a marvellous silence . . . One seems to hear the water sleep . . . Would you like to sit down on the edge of the marble basin? There is a lime-tree which the sun never pierces . . .

MELISANDA.

I am going to lie down on the marble.—I should like to see the bottom of the water . . .

Sc. i. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

PELLEAS.

It has never yet been seen. It is perhaps as deep as the sea. No one knows whence this water comes. Perhaps from the depths of the earth . . .

MELISANDA.

If something were shining down at the bottom, one might see it perhaps . . .

PELLEAS.

Do not lean so far over . . .

MELISANDA.

I want to touch the water . . .

PELLEAS.

Take care not to slip . . . I will hold you by the hand . . .

MELISANDA.

No, no, I want to dip both hands in . . . it seems as if my hands were ill to-day . . .

PELLEAS.

Oh! oh! take care! take care! Meli-

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act II.

sanda! . . . Melisanda! . . . —Oh! your hair! . . .

MELISANDA [*drawing herself up*].

I cannot, I cannot reach it . . .

PELLEAS.

Your hair dipped into the water . . .

MELISANDA.

Yes, yes; it is longer than my arms . . . It is longer than myself . . .

[*Silence.*]

PELLEAS.

It was also beside a spring that he found you?

MELISANDA.

Yes . . .

PELLEAS.

What did he say to you?

MELISANDA.

Nothing;—I don't remember . . .

PELLEAS.

Was he quite close to you?

Sc. i. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

MELISANDA.

Yes ; he wanted to kiss me.

PELLEAS.

And you would not ?

MELISANDA.

No.

PELLEAS.

Why not ?

MELISANDA.

Oh ! oh ! I have seen something pass at the
bottom of the water . . .

PELLEAS.

Take care ! take care ! You will fall in !
What are you playing with ?

MELISANDA.

With the ring he gave me . . .

PELLEAS.

Take care ; you will lose it . . .

MELISANDA.

No, no ; I am sure of my hands . . .

PELLEAS.

Do not play thus, above such deep water . . .

MELISANDA.

My hands are steady.

PELLEAS.

How it shines in the sun! Don't throw it up
so high towards the sky . . .

MELISANDA.

Oh! . . .

PELLEAS.

Has it fallen?

MELISANDA.

It has fallen into the water! . . .

PELLEAS.

Where is it? where is it? . . .

MELISANDA.

I cannot see it go down . . .

PELLEAS.

I think I see it shine . . .

Sc. i. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

MELISANDA.

My ring?

PELLEAS.

Yes, yes ; over there . . .

MELISANDA.

Oh! oh! it is so far from us! . . . no, no, that is not it . . . It is lost . . . lost . . . There is nothing left but a big circle on the water . . . What shall we do? What shall we do now? . . .

PELLEAS.

You must not be so uneasy about a ring. Never mind . . . we shall perhaps find it again. Or else we shall find another . . .

MELISANDA.

No, no ; we shall never find it again, nor shall we ever find another . . . I thought I held it in my hands though . . . I had already closed my hands, and it fell in spite of all . . . I threw it too high, towards the sun . . .

PELLEAS.

Come, come, we can return another day . . .

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act ii.

come, it is time. They might be coming to meet us. It was striking noon when the ring fell.

MELISANDA.

What shall we tell Golaud if he asks where it is?

PELLEAS.

The truth, the truth, the truth . . .

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A Room in the Castle.

[GOLAUD *is discovered lying on his bed ;*
MELISANDA *is at the bedside.*]

GOLAUD.

Ah! ah! all is going well, it will be no grave matter. But I cannot explain how it came

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

about. I was hunting quietly in the forest. My horse bolted all of a sudden, for no reason. Had he seen anything unusual? . . . I had just counted the twelve strokes of noon. At the twelfth stroke, he suddenly took fright and ran like one blind and mad, against a tree. I heard nothing more. Nor do I know what happened. I fell, and he must have fallen upon me. I thought the whole forest lay on my chest; I thought my heart was crushed. But my heart is tough. It appears to be no grave matter . . .

MELISANDA.

Would you like to drink a little water?

GOLAUD.

Thank you, thank you; I am not thirsty.

MELISANDA.

Would you like another pillow? . . . There is a little bloodstain on this one.

GOLAUD.

No, no; it is not worth while. I bled at

the mouth just now. I shall perhaps do so again . . .

MELISANDA.

Are you quite sure? . . . You are not in too great pain?

GOLAUD.

No, no, I have been through more than this. I am tempered to blood and steel . . . These are not the little bones of a child; you must not be anxious . . .

MELISANDA.

Close your eyes and try to sleep. I shall stay here all night.

GOLAUD.

No, no; I will not have you tire yourself thus. I shall want nothing; I shall sleep like a child . . . What is it, Melisanda? Why are you crying all of a sudden? . . .

MELISANDA [*bursting into tears*].

I am . . . I am ill too.

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

GOLAUD.

You are ill? . . . What ails you, what ails you, Melisanda? . . .

MELISANDA.

I don't know . . . I feel ill here . . . I had rather tell it you to-day; my lord, my lord, I am not happy here . . .

GOLAUD.

Why, what has happened, Melisanda? What is the matter? . . . I who had no suspicion . . . Why what has happened? . . . Has any one done you wrong? . . . Can any one have hurt you?

MELISANDA.

No, no; no one has done me the least wrong . . . It is not that . . . It is not that . . . But I cannot live here any longer. I don't know why . . . I should like to go away, to go away! . . . I shall die if I am left here . . .

GOLAUD.

But something must have happened? You must be hiding something from me? . . . Tell me the whole truth, Melisanda . . . Is it the king? . . . Is it my mother? . . . Is it Pelleas? . . .

MELISANDA.

No, no; it is not Pelleas. It is nobody . . . You cannot understand me . . .

GOLAUD.

Why should I not understand? . . . If you tell me nothing, what would you have me do? . . . Tell me all, and I shall understand all.

MELISANDA.

I don't myself know what it is . . . I don't rightly know what it is . . . If I could tell you, I would . . . It is something that is stronger than myself . . .

GOLAUD.

Come; be reasonable, Melisanda.—What

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

would you have me do?—You are no longer a child.—Is it me that you wish to leave?

MELISANDA.

Oh! no, no; it is not that . . . I should like to go away with you . . . It is here that I can no longer live . . . I feel that I shall not live much longer . . .

GOLAUD.

But there must be some reason, nevertheless. They will think you mad. They will credit you with childish dreams.—Come, is it Pelleas, by any chance?—I think he does not often speak to you . . .

MELISANDA.

Yes, yes; he speaks to me at times. He does not like me, I think; I have seen it in his eyes . . . But he speaks whenever he meets me . . .

GOLAUD.

You must not take it amiss. He has always been so. He is rather strange. And just now

he is sad ; he is thinking of his friend Marcellus, who lies at the point of death, and to whom he may not go . . . He will change, he will change, you will see; he is young . . .

MELISANDA.

But it is not that . . . It is not that . . .

GOLAUD.

What is it then?—Can you not accustom yourself to the life we lead here? Is it too dismal for you here?—It is true that the castle is very old and very gloomy . . . very cold and very deep. And all those that live in it are far in years. And the country may seem dismal too with all its ancient lightless forests. But one can make all this more cheerful if one pleases. And then, joy, joy, one cannot touch joy every day; one must take things as they are. Yet tell me of something; no matter what; I will do anything you wish . . .

MELISANDA.

Yes, yes; it is true . . . one never sees the

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

sky here. I saw it for the first time this morning . . .

GOLAUD.

Is that what makes you weep, my poor Melisanda?—Is it nothing but that?—You shed tears because you cannot see the sky?—Come, come, you are no longer of an age when one may allow oneself to cry about such things . . . And then, is summer not here? You will soon see the sky every day.—And then next year . . . Come, give me your hand; give me both your little hands. [*He takes her hands.*] Oh! oh! these little hands that I could crush like flowers . . .—Why, where is the ring I gave you?

MELISANDA.

The ring?

GOLAUD.

Yes; our wedding-ring, where is it?

MELISANDA.

I think . . . I think it fell . . .

GOLAUD.

Fell?—Where did it fall?—You have not lost it?

MELISANDA.

No, no; it fell . . . it must have fallen . . . but I know where it is . . .

GOLAUD.

Where is it?

MELISANDA.

You know . . . you know . . . the cave by the sea? . . .

GOLAUD.

Yes.

MELISANDA.

Well, it was there . . . It must have been there . . . Yes, yes; I remember . . . I went there this morning to pick up shells for little Yniold . . . There are lovely ones there . . . It slipped from my finger . . . then the sea came up; and I had to leave before I could find it.

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

GOLAUD.

Are you sure it is there?

MELISANDA.

Yes, yes; quite sure . . . I felt it slip . . . then, all of a sudden, the sound of the waves . . .

GOLAUD.

You must go and fetch it at once.

MELISANDA.

I must go and fetch it at once?

GOLAUD.

Yes.

MELISANDA.

Now?—at once?—in the dark?

GOLAUD.

Now, at once, in the dark. You must go and fetch it at once. I would rather have lost all I possess than have lost that ring. You don't know what it is. You don't know where it comes from. The sea will be very high to-night. The sea will rise and take it before

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act ii.

you . . . make haste. You must go and fetch it at once . . .

MELISANDA.

I dare not . . . I dare not go alone . . .

GOLAUD.

Go, go, no matter with whom. But you must go at once, do you hear?—Make haste; ask Pelleas to go with you.

MELISANDA.

Pelleas?—With Pelleas?—But Pelleas will not want to . . .

GOLAUD.

Pelleas will do all that you ask him. I know Pelleas better than you do. Go, go, make haste. I shall not sleep before I have the ring.

MELISANDA.

Oh! oh! I am not happy! . . . I am not happy! . . .

[Exit weeping.]

SCENE III.

Before a Cave.

[*Enter PELLEAS and
MELISANDA.*]

PELLEAS [*speaking in great agitation*].

Yes, this is the spot ; we have reached it. It is so dark that the entrance of the cave is indistinguishable from the rest of night . . . There are no stars that way. Let us wait until the moon has rent that great cloud ; it will illumine the whole cave, and then we shall be able to enter without danger. There are some dangerous points, and the path is very narrow, between two lakes which have never yet been sounded. I did not think to bring a torch or a lantern, but I fancy that the light of the sky will suffice. —You have never yet ventured into this cave?

MELISANDA.

No.

PELLEAS.

Come in, come . . . You must be able to

describe the spot where you lost the ring, in case he questions you . . . It is a very large cave and very beautiful. There are stalactites that resemble plants and men. It is full of blue shades. It has never been explored to the very end. There are, it seems, great treasures hidden there. You will see the remains of ancient shipwrecks. But one must not attempt to go far without a guide. There have been some that never came back. I myself do not dare go too far in. We will stop the moment we no longer see the light of the waves or of the sky. If one lights a little light in there it seems as if the roof were covered with stars, like the sky. They say it is because there are fragments of crystal and salt that shine in the rock.—Look, look, I think the sky is going to clear . . . Give me your hand ; don't tremble, don't tremble so. There is no danger ; we will stop the moment we can no longer perceive the light of the sea . . . Is it the sound of the cave that frightens you ? It is the sound of night, the sound of

Sc. iii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

silence . . . Do you hear the sea behind us?
—It does not seem happy to-night . . . Ah!
here is light! . . .

*[The moon broadly illumines
the entrance and a part of
the cave; one beholds, at a
certain depth, three white-
haired old beggars, seated
side by side, and support-
ing one another in sleep,
against a ledge of rock.]*

MELISANDA.

Ah!

PELLEAS.

What is it?

MELISANDA.

There are . . .

*[She points to the three
beggars.]*

PELLEAS.

Yes, yes; I too have seen them . . .

MELISANDA.

Let us go! . . . Let us go! . . .

PELLEAS.

Yes . . . They are three old beggars that have fallen asleep . . . There is a famine in the land . . . Why have they come here to sleep? . . .

MELISANDA.

Let us go! . . . Come, come . . . Let us go! . . .

PELLEAS.

Take care; don't speak so loud . . . We must not wake them . . . they are still fast asleep . . . Come.

MELISANDA.

Leave me, leave me; I had rather walk alone . . .

PELLEAS.

We will come again another day . . .

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

A Room in the Castle.

[ARKËL and PELLEAS
are discovered.]

ARKËL.

You see that everything conspires to hold you here at this moment, and that everything forbids this bootless journey. The truth as to your father's condition has been kept from you hitherto ; but it is perhaps hopeless ; and that alone should suffice to hold you here. But there are so many other reasons . . . And it is not at a time when our enemies are roused, when our people are dying of hunger and murmuring on all sides, that you have the right to desert us. And why this journey ? Marcellus is dead ; and life has heavier duties than the visiting of graves. You are weary, you say, of your inactive life ; but activity and duty are not to be found by the roadside. One must await them on the threshold, ready to bid them

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act ii.

enter at the moment of passing; and they pass every day. You have never seen them? I myself am almost blind, and yet I will teach you to see; I will show them to you, the day that you wish to beckon them in. Still, listen to me: if you think it is from the depths of your life that this journey is exacted, I shall not forbid you to undertake it; for you must know, better than I, what events you ought to offer to your being and to your destiny. I shall only ask you to wait until we know what is about to happen . . .

PELLEAS.

How long shall I have to wait?

ARKËL.

A few weeks; maybe a few days . . .

PELLEAS.

I will wait . . .

Act III.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A Room in the Castle.

[PELLEAS *and* MELISANDA
are discovered. MELI-
SANDA, with a distaff, is
spinning at the further
end of the room.]

PELLEAS.

Yniold has not come back; where has he
gone?

MELISANDA.

He heard something in the passage; he went
to see what it was.

PELLEAS.

Melisanda . . .

MELISANDA.

What is it?

PELLEAS.

. . . Can you still see to work? . . .

MELISANDA.

I work just as well in the dark . . .

PELLEAS.

I think that every one in the castle is already fast asleep. Golaud has not come home from hunting. It is late, however . . . Does he still suffer from his fall?

MELISANDA.

He has said that he suffers no more.

PELLEAS.

He ought to be more prudent; his limbs are no longer supple as at twenty . . . I can see stars out of window, and the light of the moon on the trees. It is late; he will not come back now. [*A knock at the door.*] Who is there? . . . Come in! . . . [*Little YNIOLD opens*

Sc. i. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

the door and enters the room.] Was it you that knocked so? . . . That is not the way to knock at doors. It was just as if some misfortune had happened; look, you have frightened your little mother.

LITTLE YNIOLD.

I only knocked quite a little.

PELLEAS.

It is late; father will not be coming home this evening; it is time to go to bed.

LITTLE YNIOLD.

I shall not go to bed before you do.

PELLEAS.

What? . . . What are you saying there?

LITTLE YNIOLD.

I said . . . not before you . . . not before you . . .

[He bursts into tears and takes refuge beside MELISANDA.]

MELISANDA.

What is it, Yniold? . . . What is it? . . .
why are you crying all of a sudden?

YNIOLD [*sobbing*].

Because . . . Oh! oh! because . . .

MELISANDA.

Why? . . . Why? . . . tell me . . .

YNIOLD.

Little mother . . . little mother . . . you
are going away . . .

MELISANDA.

Why, what possesses you, Yniold? . . . I have
never dreamed of going away . . .

YNIOLD.

Yes, yes; father is gone . . . father has not
come back, and now you are going too . . .
I have seen it . . . I have seen it . . .

MELISANDA.

But there has been no question of such a

Sc. I. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

thing, Yniold . . . By what could you see that
I was going? . . .

YNIOLD.

I saw it . . . I saw it . . . You said things
to my uncle that I could not hear . . .

PELLEAS.

He is sleepy . . . he has been dreaming . . .
Come here, Yniold; are you asleep already? . . .
Come and look out of window; the swans are
fighting the dogs . . .

YNIOLD [*at the window*].

Oh! oh! They are chasing them, the
dogs! . . . They are chasing them! . . . Oh!
oh! the water! . . . the wings! . . . the
wings! . . . They are frightened . . .

PELLEAS [*going back to MELISANDA*].

He is sleepy; he is struggling against sleep,
and his eyes are closing . . .

MELISANDA [*singing in an undertone as she spins*].

Saint Daniel and Saint Michael, O! . . .

Saint Michael and Saint Raphael too . . .

YNIOLD [*at the window*].

Oh! oh! mother dear! . . .

MELISANDA [*rising abruptly*].

What is it, Yniold? . . . What is it? . . .

YNIOLD.

I have seen something out of window! . . .

[PELLEAS and MELISANDA
run to the window.]

PELLEAS.

What is there at the window? . . . What is it that you saw? . . .

YNIOLD.

Oh! oh! I saw something! . . .

PELLEAS.

But there is nothing. I can see nothing . . .

Sc. i. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

MELISANDA

Nor I . . .

PELLEAS.

Where did you see something? In what direction? . . .

YNIOLD.

Over there, over there! . . It has gone now.

PELLEAS.

He no longer knows what he is saying. He must have seen the moonshine on the forest. There are often strange reflections . . . or else something may have passed along the road . . . or in his sleep. For look, look, I believe he is going to sleep for good . . .

YNIOLD [*at the window*].

Father is there! father is there!

PELLEAS [*going to the window*].

He is right; Golaud has just entered the courtyard.

YNIOLD.

Father dear! . . . father dear! . . . I will go
and meet him! . . .

[Exit running.—Silence.]

PELLEAS.

They are coming upstairs . . .

*[Enter GOLAUD, and little
YNIOLD bearing a lamp.]*

GOLAUD.

Are you still waiting in the dark?

YNIOLD.

I have brought a light, mother, a big light!
[He lifts up the lamp and looks at MELISANDA.]
Have you been crying, mother dear? . . .
Have you been crying? . . . *[He lifts the lamp
towards PELLEAS, and looks at him also.]* You
too, you too, have you been crying? . . . Father
dear, look father dear; they have been crying,
both of them . . .

GOLAUD.

Do not hold the light thus to their eyes . . .

SCENE II.

*One of the castle towers. A sentry path runs
below one of the tower windows.*

MELISANDA [*combing her hair at the window*].

Thirty years I've sought, my sisters,
Far his hiding-place,
Thirty years I've walked, my sisters,
But have found no trace . . .

Thirty years I've walked, my sisters,
And my feet are worn,
He was all about, my sisters,
Yet he was unborn . . .

Sad the hour grows, my sisters,
Bare my feet again,
For the evening dies, my sisters,
And my soul's in pain . . .

You are now sixteen, my sisters,
Time it is for you,
Take my staff away, my sisters,
Go and seek him too . . .

[*Enter PELLEAS by the
sentry path.*]

PELLEAS.

Hola! Hola! ho! . . .

MELISANDA.

Who is there?

PELLEAS.

I, I, and I! . . . What are you doing there at the window, singing like a bird that is not of this land?

MELISANDA.

I am doing my hair for the night . .

PELLEAS.

Is that what I see on the wall? . . . I thought you had a light by you . . .

MELISANDA.

I opened the window; it is too hot in the tower . . . It is fine to-night . . .

PELLEAS.

There are innumerable stars: I have never seen so many as to-night . . . but the moon is

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

still on the sea . . . Do not stay in the dark,
Melisanda, lean over a little, that I may see
your hair all loose . . .

MELISANDA.

I am hideous so . . .

[She leans out of window.]

PELLEAS.

Oh! oh! Melisanda! . . . oh! you are beau-
tiful! . . . you are beautiful so! . . . lean
over! . . . lean over! . . . let me come nearer
to you . . .

MELISANDA.

- I cannot come any nearer to you . . . I am
leaning over as far as I can . . .

PELLEAS.

I cannot climb any higher . . . give me at
least your hand this evening . . . before I go
away . . . I leave to-morrow . . .

MELISANDA.

No, no, no . . .

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act iii.

PELLEAS.

✓ Yes, yes, yes; I am going, I am going
to-morrow . . . give me your hand, your hand,
your little hand to my lips . . .

MELISANDA.

I shall not give you my hand if you go
away . . .

PELLEAS.

Give, give, give . . .

MELISANDA.

Then you will not go?

PELLEAS.

I will wait, I will wait . . .

MELISANDA.

I see a rose in the dark . . .

PELLEAS.

Where? . . . I can only see the branches of
the willow that rise above the wall . . .

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

MELISANDA.

Lower, lower in the garden ; over there, right
in the dusky green . . .

PELLEAS.

It is not a rose . . . I shall go and look
presently, but give me your hand first ; first
your hand . . .

MELISANDA.

There, there ; . . . I cannot bend down any
lower . . .

PELLEAS.

My lips cannot reach your hand . . .

MELISANDA.

I cannot bend down any lower . . . I am
on the point of falling . . . Oh ! oh ! my hair
is falling down the tower ! . . .

*[Her hair turns over suddenly as
she bends, and inundates*

PELLEAS.]

PELLEAS.

Oh! oh! what is this? . . . Your hair, your hair is coming down to me! . . . All your hair, Melisanda, all your hair has fallen down the tower! . . . I hold it in my hands, I hold it in my mouth . . . I hold it in my arms, I wind it about my neck . . . I shall not open my hands again this night . . .

MELISANDA.

Leave me! leave me! . . . You will make me fall! . . .

PELLEAS.

No, no, no . . . I never saw hair like yours, Melisanda! . . . See, see, see; it comes from so high, and yet its floods reach my heart . . . They reach my knees! . . . And it is soft, it is as soft as if it had fallen from heaven! . . . I can no longer see heaven for your hair. Do you see? do you see? . . . My two hands cannot hold it; there are even some locks on the willow branches . . . They live, like birds, in my

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

hands . . . and they love me, they love me better than you! . . .

MELISANDA.

Leave me, leave me . . . Some one might pass . . .

PELLEAS.

No, no, no; I shall not release you to-night . . . You are my prisoner for this night; all night, all night . . .

MELISANDA.

Pelleas! Pelleas! . . .

PELLEAS.

I am tying them, tying them to the branches of the willow . . . you shall never go from here again . . . you shall never go from here again . . . Look, look, I am kissing your hair . . . All pain has left me here in the midst of your hair . . . Do you hear my kisses creep along your hair? . . . They are climbing all the length of your hair . . . Every single hair must

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act iii.

bring you one . . . You see, you see, I can open my hands . . . My hands are free, and yet you cannot leave me . . .

MELISANDA.

Oh! oh! you have hurt me . . . [*A flight of doves leave the tower and flutter about them in the night.*—What has happened, Pelleas?—What is flying here all about me?

PELLEAS.

The doves are leaving the tower . . . I frightened them; they are flying away . . .

MELISANDA.

They are my doves, Pelleas.—Let us go, leave me; they might never come back . . .

PELLEAS.

Why should they not come back?

MELISANDA.

They will lose themselves in the dark . . . Leave me, let me lift up my head . . . I hear

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

the sound of footsteps . . . Leave me!—It is Golaud! . . . I believe it is Golaud! . . . He has heard us . . .

PELLEAS.

Wait! wait! . . . Your locks are twisted round the branches . . . They caught there in the dark . . . Wait! wait! . . . The night is dark . . .

[*Enter GOLAUD by the sentry path.*]

GOLAUD.

What are you doing here?

PELLEAS.

What am I doing here? . . . I . . .

GOLAUD.

You are children . . . Melisanda, don't lean so far out of the window; you will fall . . . Don't you know that it is late?—It is close upon midnight.—Don't play thus in the dark.

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act iii.

You are children . . . [*Laughing nervously.*]

What children! . . . What children! . . .

[*Exit, with PELLEAS.*]

SCENE III.

The Castle Vaults.

[*Enter GOLAUD and
PELLEAS.*]

GOLAUD.

Take care; this way, this way.—Have you never ventured down into these vaults?

PELLEAS.

Yes, once; but it was long ago . . .

GOLAUD.

They are prodigiously large; a series of enormous caves that lead, heaven knows where. The whole castle is built above these caves. Do you smell what a deathly odour reigns here?—

Sc. iii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

That is what I wanted to show you. I have an idea that it rises from the little underground lake you will see presently. Take care; walk before me, in the rays of my lantern. I will tell you when we are there. [*They continue to walk in silence.*] Hey! hey! Pelleas! stop! stop! [*He seizes him by the arm.*] For God's sake! . . . But can't you see?—Another step and you were in the abyss! . . .

PELLEAS.

I could see nothing! . . . The lantern was shedding no light my way . . .

GOLAUD.

I missed my footing . . . but if I had not held you by the arm . . . Well, here is the stagnant water of which I spoke . . . Do you smell the stench of death that rises from it?—Come to the edge of that overhanging rock and lean over a little. It will rise and strike you in the face.

PELLEAS.

I smell it already . . . one would say it was the smell of tombs.

GOLAUD.

Further, further . . . It is this smell that on certain days infects the castle. The King will not believe that it comes from here.—It would be well to wall up the cavern that contains this stagnant water. It is time, moreover, that these vaults should be examined. Have you noticed the crevices in the walls and in the pillars of the vaults? There is here some hidden, unsuspected work; and the whole castle will be engulfed one night if no care be taken. But what is to be done? Nobody likes coming down here . . . There are strange crevices in many of the walls . . . Oh! here . . . do you smell the smell of death that rises?

PELLEAS.

Yes; there is a smell of death creeping up around us . . .

Sc. iii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

GOLAUD.

Lean over; don't be afraid . . . I will hold you . . . give me . . . no, no, not your hand . . . it might slip . . . your arm, your arm . . . Do you see the abyss? [*Uneasily.*—Pelleas? Pelleas? . . .

PELLEAS.

Yes; I think I see down to the bottom of the abyss . . . Is it the light that quivers so? . . . You . . .

[*He stands erect, turns round, and looks at GOLAUD.*]

GOLAUD [*in trembling voice*].

Yes; it is the lantern . . . Look, I was waving it about to light up the sides . . .

PELLEAS.

I am stifling here . . . let us go . . .

GOLAUD.

Yes; let us go . . .

[*Exeunt in silence.*]

SCENE IV.

A Terrace at the entrance of the Vaults.

[*Enter GOLAUD and PELLEAS.*]

PELLEAS.

Ah! I breathe at last! . . . I thought, at one moment, that I was going to faint away in those enormous caves. I was on the point of falling . . . The air is humid there and heavy as a dew of lead, and the darkness is thick as envenomed pulp . . . And now, all the air of all the sea! . . . There is a fresh breeze, look; fresh as a new-opened leaf, on the little green waves . . . Why! They have just been watering the flowers at the foot of the terrace, and the scent of the foliage and of the wet roses rises to us here . . . It must be close upon midday, the flowers are already in the shadow of the tower . . . It is midday; I hear the bells ringing, and the children are going down to the

Sc. iv. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

beach to bathe . . . I did not know we had stayed so long in those caves . . .

GOLAUD.

We went down towards eleven . . .

PELLEAS.

Earlier; it must have been earlier; I heard half-past ten strike.

GOLAUD.

Half-past ten or a quarter to eleven . . .

PELLEAS.

They have opened all the castle windows. It will be unusually hot this afternoon . . . Why, there are our mother and Melisanda at one of the windows of the tower . . .

GOLAUD.

Yes, they have taken shelter on the shady side.—Concerning Melisanda, I heard what passed between you, and all that was said yesterday evening. I know quite well that it

was child's play, but it must not be repeated. Melisanda is very young and very impressionable; and we must handle her all the more gently as she may be about to become a mother . . . She is very frail, hardly woman yet; and the least emotion might bring about misfortune. It is not the first time I have had cause to think that there might be something between you . . . you are older than she; it is sufficient to have told you . . . Avoid her as much as possible; yet not markedly at all events, not markedly . . . —What is it that I see there on the road, towards the forest? . . .

PELLEAS.

Those are flocks that are being led to town . . .

GOLAUD.

They are crying like lost children; one would say that they already smelt the butcher. It will be time to go in to dinner.—What a lovely day! What an admirable day for the harvest! . . .

[*Exeunt.*]

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SCENE V.

Before the Castle.

[*Enter GOLAUD and little
YNIOLD.*]

GOLAUD.

Come, we will sit down here, Yniold ; come on to my knee : from here we shall be able to see all that is going on in the forest. I seem never to see you now. You too forsake me ; you are always with your little mother . . . Why, we are sitting just under little mother's windows.—She is perhaps saying her evening prayers at this moment . . . But tell me, Yniold, she and your Uncle Pelleas are often together, are they not?

YNIOLD.

Yes, yes ; always, father dear ; when you are not there, father . . .

GOLAUD.

Ah!—Look, some one is passing with a

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act iii.

lantern in the garden.—But I have been told that they don't care for one another . . . It appears that they often quarrel . . . eh? Is it true?

YNIOLD.

Yes, yes ; it is true.

GOLAUD.

Yes?—Ah! ah!—But what do they quarrel about?

YNIOLD.

About the door.

GOLAUD.

What? About the door?—What are you telling me there?—Come now, explain yourself; why should they quarrel about the door?

YNIOLD.

Because it cannot be left open.

GOLAUD.

Who will not have it left open?—Come, why do they quarrel?

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YNIOLD.

I don't know, father dear, about the light.

GOLAUD.

I am not speaking about the light; we will talk about that presently. I am speaking about the door. Answer what I ask you; you must learn to speak; it is time . . . Don't put your hand in your mouth . . . come . . .

YNIOLD.

Father! dear father! . . . I won't do it any more . . .

[He cries.]

GOLAUD.

Come now; what are you crying for? What is the matter?

YNIOLD.

Oh! oh! father dear, you hurt me . . .

GOLAUD.

I have hurt you?—Where have I hurt you?
I never meant to do it . . .

YNIOLD.

Here, here ; on my little arm . . .

GOLAUD.

I never meant to do it ; come, don't cry any more, I will give you something to-morrow . . .

YNIOLD.

What, father dear ?

GOLAUD.

A quiver and arrows ; but now tell me what you know about the door.

YNIOLD.

Big arrows ?

GOLAUD.

Yes, yes ; very big arrows.—But why will they not have the door left open ?—Come, answer me !—no, no ; don't open your mouth to cry. I am not angry. We will talk quietly as Pelleas and little mother do when they are together. What do they talk about when they are together ?

YNIOLD.

Pelleas and little mother?

GOLAUD.

Yes; what do they talk about?

YNIOLD.

About me; always about me.

GOLAUD.

And what do they say about you?

YNIOLD.

They say that I shall grow very tall.

GOLAUD.

Ah! misery! . . . I am here like a blind man that seeks his treasure in the ocean's depths! . . . I am like a new-born infant lost in the forest, and you . . . But come, Yniold, I was deep in thought; let us talk seriously. Pelleas and little mother, do they never speak of me when I am not there? . . .

YNIOLD.

Yes, yes, father dear ; they always speak of you.

GOLAUD.

Ah ! . . . And what do they say about me ?

YNIOLD.

They say that I shall grow as tall as you.

GOLAUD.

Are you always with them ?

YNIOLD.

Yes, yes ; always, always, father dear.

GOLAUD.

They never tell you to go and play elsewhere ?

YNIOLD.

No, father dear ; they are afraid when I am not there.

GOLAUD.

They are afraid ? . . . by what can you see that they are afraid ?

YNIOLD.

Little mother who is always saying: don't go away, don't go away . . . They are unhappy, and yet they laugh . . .

GOLAUD.

But that does not prove that they are afraid . . .

YNIOLD.

Yes, yes, father dear; she is afraid . . .

GOLAUD.

What makes you say that she is afraid?

YNIOLD.

They always cry in the dark.

GOLAUD.

Ah! ah! . . .

YNIOLD.

That makes one cry too . . .

GOLAUD.

Yes, yes . . .

YNIOLD.

She is pale, father dear.

GOLAUD.

Ah! ah! . . . patience, my God, patience . . .

YNIOLD.

What, father dear?

GOLAUD.

Nothing, nothing, my child.—I saw a wolf pass in the forest.—Then they are on good terms?—I am glad to hear that they agree.—They kiss each other sometimes?—No? . . .

YNIOLD.

If they kiss each other, father dear?—No, no,—ah! yes, father dear, yes, yes, once . . . once when it was raining . . .

GOLAUD.

They kissed each other?—But how, how did they kiss?—

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YNIOLD.

So, father dear, so! . . . [*He gives him a kiss on the mouth, laughing.*] Ah! ah! your beard, father dear! . . . It pricks! it pricks! it pricks! It is growing quite grey, father, and your hair too; all grey, all grey . . . [*The window beneath which they are sitting is here illumined, and its brightness falls upon them.*] Ah! ah! little mother has lighted her lamp! It is light now, father dear, it is light! . . .

GOLAUD.

Yes; light is dawning . . .

YNIOLD.

Let us go there too, father dear; let us go there too . . .

GOLAUD.

Where do you want to go?

YNIOLD.

Where the light is, father dear.

GOLAUD.

No, no, my child: let us stay here in the shade awhile . . . one cannot tell, one cannot tell yet . . . Do you see these poor creatures over there who are trying to light a little fire in the forest?—It has been raining. And round the other way, do you see the old gardener trying to lift up that tree which the wind has blown across the path?—He cannot do it; the tree is too big; the tree is too heavy, and it must lie where it fell. There is no help for it all . . . I think that Pelleas is mad . .

YNIOLD.

No, father dear, he is not mad, but he is very kind.

GOLAUD.

Do you want to see your little mother?

YNIOLD.

Yes, yes; I want to see her!

GOLAUD.

Don't make a noise; I will hoist you up to the window. It is too high for me, although I am so big . . . [*He lifts up the child.*] Don't make the least noise; little mother would be terribly frightened . . . Can you see her?— Is she in the room?

YNIOLD.

Yes . . . Oh! it is light!

GOLAUD.

Is she alone?

YNIOLD.

Yes . . . no no; my uncle Pelleas is there too.

GOLAUD.

He! . . .

YNIOLD.

Ah! ah! father dear! You are hurting me! . . .

GOLAUD.

Never mind; be quiet. I shall not do it

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act iii.

again ; look, look, Yniold ! . . . I stumbled ; speak lower. What are they doing ?—

YNIOLD.

They are doing nothing, father dear ; they are expecting something.

GOLAUD.

Are they near one another ?

YNIOLD.

No, father dear.

GOLAUD.

And . . . and the bed ? are they near the bed ?

YNIOLD.

The bed, father dear ?—I don't see the bed.

GOLAUD.

Lower, lower ; they might hear you. Are they saying anything ?

YNIOLD.

No, father dear ; they are saying nothing.

GOLAUD.

But what are they doing?—They must be doing something . . .

YNIOLD.

They are looking at the light.

GOLAUD.

Both of them?

YNIOLD.

Yes, father dear.

GOLAUD.

And not speaking?

YNIOLD.

No, father dear; they have not closed their eyes.

GOLAUD.

They are not going towards one another?

YNIOLD.

No, father dear; they have not moved.

GOLAUD.

Are they sitting down?

YNIOLD.

No, father dear; they are standing against the wall.

GOLAUD.

They are making no gestures?—They are not looking at one another?—They are not making signs? . . .

YNIOLD.

No, father dear.—Oh! oh! father, they never close their eyes . . . I am dreadfully frightened . . .

GOLAUD.

Be still. They have not moved yet?

YNIOLD.

No, father dear—I am frightened, father dear, let me get down! . . .

GOLAUD.

What is there to be afraid of?—Look! look! . . .

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YNIOLD.

I dare not look any more, father dear! . . .
Let me down! . . .

GOLAUD.

Look! look! . . .

YNIOLD.

Oh! oh! I am going to scream, father
dear! . . . Let me down! let me down! . . .

GOLAUD.

Come; we will go and see what has happened.

[*Exeunt.*]

Act IV.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

A Passage in the Castle.

[*Enter, meeting, PELLEAS and
MELISANDA.*]

PELLEAS.

Where are you going? I must speak with you this evening. Shall I see you?

MELISANDA.

Yes.

PELLEAS.

I have just left my father's room. He is better. The doctor has told us that he is out of danger. Yet this morning I had a foreboding that the day would end ill. Misfortune for some time has been buzzing in my ears . . . Then, there suddenly came a great change; it

is now merely a question of time. They have opened all the windows of his room. He speaks; he seems happy. He still does not speak like an ordinary man; but his ideas no longer all seem to come from the other world . . . He has recognised me. He took my hand and said with that strange look he has worn ever since his illness: "Is that you, Pelleas? Why now, I never noticed it before, but you have got the sad kindly face of one that has not long to live . . . You must travel; you must travel . . ." Strange; I shall obey him . . . My mother was listening, and wept for joy.—Haven't you noticed? The house already seems to have come to life again, one hears breathing about one, speech, and the sound of footsteps . . . Listen; I hear voices behind that door. Quick, quick, answer me, where shall I see you?

MELISANDA.

Where would you like?

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PELLEAS.

In the park; near blindman's well?—Are you willing?—Will you come?

MELISANDA.

Yes.

PELLEAS.

It is the last evening;—I am going to travel, as my father said. You will never see me again . . .

MELISANDA.

You must not say that, Pelleas . . . I shall see you always; I shall be looking at you always . . .

PELLEAS.

It will be all very well to look . . . I shall be so far away that you will never be able to see me . . . I shall try to go very far . . . I am filled with joy, and it seems as if I had the whole weight of heaven and earth on my body, to-day . . .

MELISANDA.

What is the matter, Pelleas?—I no longer understand what you say . . .

PELLEAS.

Go, go, let us part. I hear voices behind that door . . . The strangers that arrived at the castle this morning are going out . . . Come away; the strangers are there . . .

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.

A Room in the Castle.

[ARKËL and MELISANDA
are discovered.]

ARKËL.

Now that the father of Pelleas is out of danger, and that illness, death's ancient handmaid, has left the castle, a little joy and a little

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

sunlight at last will come into the house again . . . It was full time! For, ever since your arrival, we have lived whispering, as it were, about a closed room . . . And indeed, I have pitied you, Melisanda . . . You arrived here all joyous, like a child in search of a merry-making, and as soon as you entered the hall I saw you change face, and probably soul too, just as one changes face, in spite of oneself, on entering at midday a cave too gloomy and too cold . . . And since then, since then, because of all this, often, I could no longer make you out . . . I watched you, you stood there, careless perhaps, but with the strange bewildered look of one that was ever expecting a great sorrow, out in the sunshine, in a fair garden . . . I cannot explain myself . . . But I grieved to see you; for you are too young and too beautiful to live inhaling day and night already the breath of death . . . But now all will be changed. At my age,—and this perhaps is the surest fruit of all

my life,—at my age I have acquired I know not what faith in the constancy of events, and I have always observed that each young and beautiful being, shapes around it events that are themselves young, beautiful, and happy . . . And it is you, now, that are going to open the door to the new era I dimly foresee . . . Come here; why do you stand there without answering and without so much as lifting your eyes?—I have kissed you but once until this day; and yet old men have need to touch sometimes with their lips the brow of a woman or the cheek of a child, that they may believe again in the freshness of life and repel for an instant the menaces . . . Do you fear my lips? How I have pitied you all these months! . . .

MELISANDA.

Grandfather, I was not unhappy . . .

ARKËL.

You were perhaps of those that are unhappy

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

without knowing it . . . and those are the most unhappy . . . Let me look at you so, quite close, a moment . . . One stands in such need of beauty when death is at one's side . . .

[*Enter* GOLAUD.]

GOLAUD.

Pelleas leaves this evening.

ARKËL.

There is blood upon your forehead.—What have you been doing?

GOLAUD.

Nothing, nothing . . . I have been through a hedge of thorns.

MELISANDA.

Bend down your head a little, my lord . . . I will wipe your brow . . .

GOLAUD [*repulsing her*].

I will not have you touch me, do you hear?

Go away, go away!—I am not speaking to you. Where is my sword?—I came to fetch my sword . . .

MELISANDA.

Here; on the prayer-desk.

GOLAUD.

Bring it. [*To ARKËL.*] Another poor wretch has just been found on the sea-shore, starved to death. It seems as if they were all bent on dying under our very eyes—[*To MELISANDA.*] Well, my sword?—Why are you trembling?—I am not going to kill you. I merely want to examine the blade. I do not use a sword for such things. Why are you examining me as if I were some beggar? I have not come to ask your alms. Do you hope to read something in my eyes, without my reading anything in yours?—Do you think that I know anything?—[*To ARKËL.*] Do you see those wide eyes? One would say they were proud to be rich . . .

ARKËL.

I see nothing there but great innocence . . .

GOLAUD.

Great innocence! . . . They are greater than innocence! . . . They are purer than the eyes of a lamb . . . They could give lessons in innocence to God! Great innocence! Listen; I am so near to them that I feel the freshness of their lids when they blink; and yet, I am less far from the great secrets of the other world than from the least secret of those eyes! . . . Great innocence! . . . More than innocence! It almost seems as if the angels of heaven were eternally celebrating a baptism there . . . I know them, those eyes! I have seen them at work! Close them! close them! or I shall close them for long . . .—Don't put your right hand up to your throat; I am saying a very simple thing . . . I have no double thoughts . . . If I had a double thought why should I not not say it? Ah! ah!—don't try to run away!—

Here!—Give me that hand!—Ah! your hands are too hot . . . Go away! Your flesh disgusts me . . . Here!—There is no question now of running away!—[*He seizes her by the hair.*]—You are going to follow me on your knees!—On your knees!—On your knees before me!—Ah! ah! your long hair serves some purpose at last! . . . First to the right and then to the left!—Absolom! Absolom!—Forward! backward! Down to the ground! down to the ground! . . . You see, you see; I am already laughing like an old man . . .

ARKËL [*running forward*].

Golaud! . . .

GOLAUD [*affecting a sudden calm*].

You shall do as you please, do you see.—I attach no importance to it.—I am too old; and then, I am not a spy. I shall wait to see what chance brings, and then . . . Oh! then! . . . merely because it is the custom; merely because it is the custom . . .

[*Exit.*]

Sc. iii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

ARKËL.

What is the matter with him?—Is he drunk?

MELISANDA [*in tears*].

No, no; but he does not love me any more . . . I am not happy! . . . I am not happy . . .

ARKËL.

If I were God I should pity the heart of men . . .

SCENE III.

A Terrace before the Castle.

[LITTLE YNIOLD *is discovered trying to lift a piece of rock.*]

LITTLE YNIOLD.

Oh! this stone is heavy! . . . It is heavier than I am . . . It is heavier than all the

world . . . It is heavier than all that has happened . . . I can see my golden ball between the rock and this naughty stone, and I cannot reach it . . . My little arm is not long enough . . . and the stone will not be lifted . . . I cannot lift it . . . and there is nobody that could lift it . . . It is heavier than the whole house . . . one might think it had roots in the earth . . . [*The bleating of a flock is heard in the distance.*] Oh! oh! I hear some sheep crying . . . [*He goes to the edge of the terrace to look.*] Why! the sun has gone away . . . They are coming, the little sheep; they are coming . . . How many there are! . . . How many there are! . . . They are afraid of the dark . . . They huddle together! They huddle together! . . . They can hardly walk any further . . . They are crying! they are crying! and they are running fast . . . running fast! . . . They are already at the big cross-road. Ah! ah! They don't know which way to go . . . They are not crying now . . . They are

Sc. iii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

waiting . . . There are some that want to turn to the right . . . They all want to turn to the right . . . They may not! . . . Their shepherd is throwing earth at them . . . Ah! ah! They are going to pass this way . . . They are obeying! They are obeying! They are going to pass in front of the terrace . . . They are going to pass in front of the rocks . . . I shall see them close . . . Oh! oh! how many there are! . . . How many there are . . . All the road is full of them . . . They are all silent now . . . Shepherd! shepherd! why don't they talk any more?

THE SHEPHERD [*unseen*].

Because it is no longer the way to the fold . . .

YNIOLD.

Where are they going? Shepherd! shepherd!—where are they going?—He does not hear me. They are already too far away . . . They are running fast . . . They make no

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act iv.

noise now . . . It is no longer the way to the fold . . . Where will they sleep to-night, I wonder? Oh! oh! It is too dark here! . . . I shall go and say something to somebody . . .

[*Exit*]

SCENE IV.

A Spring in the Park.

[*Enter PELLEAS.*]

PELLEAS.

It is the last evening . . . the last evening . . . All must end here . . . I have played like a child about a thing I did not suspect . . . I have played, dreaming, about the pitfalls of destiny . . . Who is it that suddenly has waked me? I shall take flight shrieking with joy and pain, as a blind man might flee from the burning of his house . . . I shall tell her that I am taking flight . . . My father is out

Sc. iv. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

of danger, and I have not now wherewith to lie to myself . . . It is late ; she is not coming . . . it would be better for me to go without seeing her again . . . I must look at her well this time . . . There are things I cannot remember , . . One would think at times I had not seen her for a hundred years . . . And I have not yet gazed at her gaze . . . I shall have nothing left if I go away so. And all these memories . . . it is as if I were to carry away a little water in a muslin bag . . . I must see her one last time, see down into the depths of her heart . . . I must say all that I have not said . . .

[*Enter MELISANDA.*]

MELISANDA.

Pelleas !

PELLEAS.

Melisanda ! Is it you, Melisanda ?

MELISANDA.

Yes.

PELLEAS.

Come here; don't stand there at the edge of the moonlight. Come here. We have so much to say to one another . . . Come here into the shadow of the lime-tree.

MELISANDA.

Leave me in the light.

PELLEAS.

They might see us from the turret windows. Come here; here we have nothing to fear. Take care; they might see us . . .

MELISANDA.

I want them to see me . . .

PELLEAS.

Why, what is the matter with you? Were you able to leave unseen?

MELISANDA.

Yes; your brother was asleep . . .

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PELLEAS.

It is late. In an hour they will close the doors. We must take care. Why did you come so late?

MELISANDA.

Your brother had a bad dream. And then my dress caught in the nails of the door. Look, it is torn. All that time I lost, and I ran . . .

PELLEAS.

My poor Melisanda! . . . I should almost be afraid to touch you . . . you are still all out of breath like a hunted bird . . . Is it for me, for me that you do all this? . . . I hear your heart beat as if it were my own . . . Come here . . . closer, closer to me . . .

MELISANDA.

Why are you laughing?

PELLEAS.

I am not laughing;—or else I am laughing

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA: Act iv.

for joy, without knowing it . . . There is rather cause to weep . . .

MELISANDA.

We have been here before . . . I remember . . .

PELLEAS.

Yes . . . yes . . . Long months ago . . . Then, I did not know . . . Do you know why I asked you to come this evening?

MELISANDA.

No.

PELLEAS.

It is the last time I shall see you, perhaps . . . I have to go away for ever . . .

MELISANDA.

Why do you always say that you are going? . . .

PELLEAS.

Must I tell you what you know already? Don't you know what I am going to tell you?

MELISANDA.

Indeed not, indeed not; I know nothing . . .

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PELLEAS.

Don't you know why I have to go away? . . .
Don't you know that it is because . . . [*He
kisses her abruptly.*] . . . I love you . . .

MELISANDA [*in a low voice*].

I love you too . . .

PELLEAS.

Oh! oh! What did you say, Melisanda? . . .
I hardly heard what you said . . . The ice has
been broken with red-hot irons . . . You say
that in a voice that comes from the end of the
world! . . . I hardly heard you . . . You love
me? You love me too? . . . Since when have
you loved me?

MELISANDA.

Since . . . always . . . Since I first saw you.

PELLEAS.

Oh! how you say that! . . . One would say
that your voice had passed over the sea in spring-
time! . . . I never heard it until now . . . it

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act iv.

seems as if rain had fallen on my heart . . . You say that so simply! . . . As a questioned angel might . . . I cannot believe it, Melisanda . . . Why should you love me? But why do you love me? Is it true what you say? You are not deceiving me? You are not lying just a little, to make me smile? . . .

MELISANDA.

No, I never lie; I only lie to your brother.

PELLEAS.

Oh! how you say that! . . . Your voice! your voice! . . . It is fresher and truer than water! . . . It feels like pure water on my lips! . . . It feels like pure water on my hands . . . Give me, give me your hands . . . Oh! your hands are small . . . I did not know you were so beautiful! . . . I had never seen anything so beautiful before I saw you . . . I was ill at ease, I sought throughout the house, I sought throughout the country . . . And I could not

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find beauty . . . And now I have found you! . . .
I have found you! . . . I don't believe earth
holds a more beautiful woman! . . . Where are
you? I no longer hear you breathe . . .

MELISANDA.

That is because I am looking at you . . .

PELLEAS.

Why are you looking at me so solemnly?
We are already in the shade. It is too dark
under this tree. Come into the light. We
cannot see how happy we are. Come, come;
we have so little time . . .

MELISANDA.

No, no; let us stay here . . . I am nearer to
you in the dark . . .

PELLEAS.

Where are your eyes? You are not going to
run away from me? You are not thinking of
me at this moment.

MELISANDA.

Indeed yes, indeed yes ; I think but of you . . .

PELLEAS.

You were looking elsewhere . . .

MELISANDA.

I saw you elsewhere . . .

PELLEAS.

You are rapt . . . What is the matter with you? You seem not to be happy . . .

MELISANDA.

Yes, yes ; I am happy, but I am sad . . .

PELLEAS.

One is sad, often, when one loves . . .

MELISANDA.

I must always weep when I think of you . . .

PELLEAS.

I too . . . I too, Melisanda . . . I am close to you ; I weep for joy, and yet . . . [*He kisses*

Sc. iv. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

her again] . . . you are strange when I kiss you
so . . . You are so beautiful that one would
say you were going to die . . .

MELISANDA.

You too . . .

PELLEAS.

There, there . . . We cannot do as we wish . . .
I did not love you the first time I saw you . . .

MELISANDA.

Nor I . . . nor I . . . I was afraid . . .

PELLEAS.

I could not admit of your eyes . . . I
wanted to go away at once . . . and then . . .

MELISANDA.

I never wanted to come . . . I still don't
know why, I was afraid to come . . .

PELLEAS.

There are so many things one will never
know . . . We are always waiting; and

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act iv.

then . . . What noise is that? They are closing the doors! . . .

MELISANDA.

Yes, they have closed the doors . . .

PELLEAS.

We shall not be able to go back! Do you hear the bolts? Listen! listen! . . . the big chains! . . . the big chains! . . . It is too late, it is too late! . . .

MELISANDA.

All the better! all the better! all the better! . . .

PELLEAS.

You? . . . See, see . . . It is no longer we who wish it! . . . All's lost, all's saved! all's saved this evening! Come! come . . . My heart beats like a madman, right up at my throat . . . [*He enfolds her.*] Listen! listen! my heart is about to choke me . . . Come!

Sc. iv. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

come! . . . Ah! how beautiful it is in the
dark! . . .

MELISANDA.

There is some one behind us! . . .

PELLEAS.

I see no one . . .

MELISANDA.

I heard a noise . . .

PELLEAS.

I only hear your heart in the dark . . .

MELISANDA.

I heard the dead leaves crackle . .

PELLEAS.

It is the wind that has hushed suddenly . . .
It fell whilst we were kissing . . .

MELISANDA.

How tall our shadows are this evening! . . .

PELLEAS.

They entwine right down to the end of the

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act IV.

garden . . . Oh! how far from us they kiss! . . .
Look! look! . . .

MELISANDA [*in stifled voice*].

A-a-h! He is behind a tree!

PELLEAS.

Who?

MELISANDA.

Golaud!

PELLEAS.

Golaud?—where then?—I see nothing . . .

MELISANDA.

There . . . at the tip of our shadows . . .

PELLEAS.

Yes, yes; I have seen him . . . We must
not turn round too suddenly . . .

MELISANDA.

He has his sword . . .

PELLEAS.

I have none . . .

Sc. iv. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

MELISANDA.

He saw that we were kissing . . .

PELLEAS.

He does not know that we have seen him . . .
Do not move; do not turn your head . . . he
would rush out upon us . . . He will stay
there as long as he thinks we know nothing . . .
He is watching us . . . He is still motion-
less . . . Go, go at once, this way . . . I
will wait for him, I will hold him back . . .

MELISANDA.

No, no, no! . . .

PELLEAS.

Go! go! He has seen everything! . . . He
will kill us! . . .

MELISANDA.

All the better! all the better! all the
better! . . .

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act iv.

PELLEAS.

He is coming! he is coming! . . . Your mouth! . . . Your mouth! . . .

MELISANDA.

Yes! . . . yes! yes! . . .

[They kiss distractedly.]

PELLEAS.

Oh! oh! All the stars are falling! . . .

MELISANDA.

On me too! on me too! . . .

PELLEAS.

Again! Again! . . . Give! give! . . .

MELISANDA.

All! all! all!

[GOLAUD rushes upon them, sword in hand, and strikes PELLEAS, who falls beside the spring. MELISANDA flies terror-stricken.]

Sc. iv. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

MELISANDA [*flying*].

Oh! oh! I am not brave . . . I am not
brave! . . .

[GOLAUD *pursues her*
through the wood
in silence.]

Act V.



ACT V.

SCENE I.

A low hall in the Castle.

[The Maid-servants are discovered gathered together; some children are playing outside, before one of the air-holes.]

AN OLD SERVANT.

Wait and see, wait and see, girls; it will be this evening. They will come and tell us presently . . .

ANOTHER SERVANT.

They will not come and tell us . . . They no longer know what they are about . . .

THIRD SERVANT.

Let us wait here . . .

FOURTH SERVANT.

We shall know well enough when to go upstairs . . .

FIFTH SERVANT.

When the time comes, we will go up of our own accord . . .

SIXTH SERVANT.

There is no sound to be heard now in the house . . .

SEVENTH SERVANT.

We ought to tell those children to be quiet who are playing in front of the air-hole.

EIGHTH SERVANT.

They will keep quiet of themselves presently.

NINTH SERVANT.

The time has not yet come . . .

[*Enter an old Servant.*]

Sc. i. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

THE OLD SERVANT.

No one can get into the room now. I listened for over an hour . . . One might have heard the flies walk on the doors . . . I heard nothing . . .

FIRST SERVANT.

Have they left her alone in the room?

THE OLD SERVANT.

No, no; I think the room is full of people.

FIRST SERVANT.

They will be coming, they will be coming presently . . .

THE OLD SERVANT.

Lord! Lord! It is not happiness that has entered the house . . . One may not speak, but if I could tell what I know . . .

SECOND SERVANT.

It was you that found them at the door?

THE OLD SERVANT.

Why yes, yes; it was I that found them. The doorkeeper says it was he that saw them first; yet it was I that waked him. He was lying asleep on his stomach and would not wake up.—And now he comes and says: It was I that saw them first. Is that fair?—You must know that I had burnt myself lighting a lamp to go down into the cellar.—Whatever was I going to do in the cellar?—I can't remember now what I was going to do in the cellar.—Anyway, I got up very early; it was not yet quite light; I said to myself: I will cross the courtyard and then I will open the door. Well, I went downstairs on tip-toe and opened the door as if it were any ordinary door . . . Lord! Lord! What did I see? Guess what I saw? . . .

FIRST SERVANT.

They were just in front of the door?

Sc. i. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

THE OLD SERVANT.

They were lying, both of them, in front of the door! . . . Just like poor folk that have been hungry too long . . . They were clinging close together as little children do when they are afraid. The little princess was nearly dead, and big Golaud still had his sword sticking in his side . . . There was blood on the stones . . .

SECOND SERVANT.

We ought to tell the children to be quiet . . . They are screaming with all their might in front of the air-hole . . .

THIRD SERVANT.

One can no longer hear what one is saying . . .

FOURTH SERVANT.

There is nothing to be done; I have tried already, they will not be quiet . . .

FIRST SERVANT.

It seems that he is all but cured?

THE OLD SERVANT.

Who?

FIRST SERVANT.

Big Golaud.

THIRD SERVANT.

Yes, yes; they have led him into his wife's room. I met them just now in the passage. They were supporting him as if he were drunk. He still cannot walk alone.

THE OLD SERVANT.

He could not manage to kill himself; he is too big. But she was hardly wounded at all, and it is she that is going to die . . . Do you understand it?

FIRST SERVANT.

Did you see the wound?

THE OLD SERVANT.

As clearly as I see you, my girl.—I saw everything, do you understand . . . I saw it before any of the others . . . A tiny little wound in

Sc. i. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

her little left breast. A little wound that would not kill a pigeon. Does it seem natural?

FIRST SERVANT.

Yes, yes; there is something beneath all this . . .

SECOND SERVANT.

Yes; but she was confined three days ago . . .

THE OLD SERVANT.

Just so! . . . She was confined on her death-bed; is not that a great warning?—And what a child! Have you seen it?—A little puny girl that a beggar would not care to bring into the world . . . a little waxen thing that came much too soon . . . a little waxen thing that has to live in lamb's wool . . . yes, yes; it is not happiness that has entered the house . . .

FIRST SERVANT.

Yes, yes; God's hand has moved . . .

SECOND SERVANT.

All this has not happened for no reason . . .

THIRD SERVANT.

And then our kind lord Pelleas . . . where is he? Nobody knows . . .

THE OLD SERVANT.

Indeed, yes; every one knows . . . But no one dares speak of it . . . One must not speak of this . . . one must not speak of that . . . one no longer speaks of anything . . . one no longer speaks the truth . . . But I know that he was found at the bottom of blindman's well . . . only nobody, nobody has been able to get a sight of him . . . There, there, it is only on the last day that all will be known . . .

FIRST SERVANT.

I dare no longer sleep here . . .

THE OLD SERVANT.

When once misfortune has entered the house, it's all very well to hold one's peace . . .

Sc. i. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

THIRD SERVANT.

Yes ; it finds you out all the same . . .

THE OLD SERVANT.

Yes, yes ; but we go not as we would . . .

FOURTH SERVANT.

We do not as we would . . .

FIRST SERVANT.

They are afraid of us now . . .

SECOND SERVANT.

They keep counsel, all of them . . .

THIRD SERVANT.

They lower their eyes in the passages.

FOURTH SERVANT.

They speak in whispers only.

FIFTH SERVANT.

One might think they had all done it together.

SIXTH SERVANT.

There is no knowing what they have done . . .

SEVENTH SERVANT.

What is one to do when the masters are afraid? . . .

[*Silence.*]

FIRST SERVANT

I no longer hear the children calling.

SECOND SERVANT.

They have sat down in front of the air-hole.

THIRD SERVANT.

They are pressing close to one another.

THE OLD SERVANT.

I hear no sound now in the house . . .

FIRST SERVANT.

One cannot even hear the children breathe . . .

THE OLD SERVANT.

Come, come; it is time to go upstairs . . .

[*Exeunt, in silence.*]

SCENE II.

A Room in the Castle.

[ARKËL, GOLAUD, and the
DOCTOR are discovered
in a corner of the room.
MELISANDA is lying on
her bed.]

THE DOCTOR.

It is not of this small wound that she could die; a bird would not die of it . . . it is therefore not you that have killed her, my good lord; you must not distress yourself so . . . She could not have lived . . . She was born for no reason . . . to die; and now she is dying for no reason . . . And then, it is not said that we shall not save her . . .

ARKËL.

No, no; it seems to me that we are too silent, in spite of ourselves, in her room . . . It is a bad sign . . . See how she sleeps . . . slowly,

slowly . . . it is as if her soul had grown chill
for ever . . .

GOLAUD.

I have killed without cause! I have killed
without cause! . . . Is it not enough to make
the stones weep! . . . They had kissed each
other, like little children . . . They had simply
kissed each other . . . They were brother and
sister . . . And I, and I all at once! . . . I did
it in spite of myself, you see . . . I did it in
spite of myself . . .

THE DOCTOR.

Take care; I think she is waking . . .

MELISANDA.

Open the window . . . open the window . . .

ARKËL.

Do you wish me to open this one, Melisanda?

MELISANDA.

No, no, the big window . . . the big window . . .
that I may see . . .

ARKËL.

Is the sea air not too cold this evening?

THE DOCTOR.

Do as she asks . . .

MELISANDA.

Thank you . . . Is that the sun setting?

ARKËL.

Yes; the sun is setting on the sea; it is late.
How are you feeling, Melisanda?

MELISANDA.

Well, well. Why do you ask me that? I
have never felt better. Yet it seems as if I
knew of something . . .

ARKËL.

What do you say? I don't understand
you . . .

MELISANDA.

I don't myself understand all that I say, do
you see . . . I don't know what I say . . . I

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act v.

don't know what I know . . . I no longer say
what I wish . . .

ARKËL.

Come now, come now . . . It is a joy to hear
you speak so; you were a little delirious these
last days, and we could not always understand
you . . . But now, that is all very far away . . .

MELISANDA.

I don't know . . . Are you all alone in the
room, grandfather?

ARKËL.

No; the doctor who cured you is here too . . .

MELISANDA.

Ah . . .

ARKËL.

And then there is some one else besides . . .

MELISANDA.

Who is it?

ARKËL.

It is . . . You must not be afraid . . . He

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

does not wish you the least harm, be sure of it . . . If you are afraid, he will go away . . . He is very unhappy . . .

MELISANDA.

Who is it?

ARKËL.

It is . . . it is your husband . . . it is Golaud . . .

MELISANDA.

Golaud is here? Why does he not come close to me?

GOLAUD [*dragging himself towards the bed*].

Melisanda . . . Melisanda . . .

MELISANDA.

Is that you, Golaud? I hardly knew you again . . . It is that the evening sun is shining in my eyes . . . Why are you looking at the walls? You have grown thinner and older . . . Is it long since we saw each other?

GOLAUD [*to ARKËL and the DOCTOR*].

Will you go out of the room an instant, if you

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act v.

please, if you please . . . I will leave the door wide open . . . An instant only . . . I want to say something to her; otherwise I cannot die . . . Will you? Go down to the end of the passage; you can come back at once, at once . . . Do not refuse me this . . . I am a miserable wretch. [*Exeunt* ARKËL *and the* DOCTOR.] Melisanda, have you some pity for me, as I have for you? . . . Melisanda? . . . Do you forgive me, Melisanda? . . .

MELISANDA.

Yes, yes, I forgive you . . . What is there to forgive? . . .

GOLAUD.

I have done you such great wrong, Melisanda . . . I cannot tell you the wrong I have done you . . . But I see it, I see it so clearly to-day . . . ever since the first day . . . And all that hitherto I did not know, leaps into my eyes this evening . . . And it is all my fault, all that has happened, all that is going to

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

happen . . . If I could only say it, you would see how clearly I see! . . . I see all, I see all! . . . But I loved you so! . . . I loved you so! . . . And now some one is going to die . . . It is I that am going to die . . . And I want to know . . . I want to ask you . . . You will not take it amiss? . . . I want . . . The truth has to be told to one about to die . . . He has to know the truth, else he could not sleep . . . Do you swear to tell me the truth?

MELISANDA.

Yes.

GOLAUD.

Did you love Pelleas?

MELISANDA.

Why yes: I loved him. Where is he?

GOLAUD.

Don't you understand me? Won't you understand me? It seems to me . . . it seems to me . . . Well, it is this: I ask you whether you loved him with a forbidden love? . . . Did you . . .

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act v.

were you guilty? Tell me; tell me, yes, yes, yes? . . .

MELISANDA.

No, no; we were not guilty. Why do you ask me that?

GOLAUD.

Melisanda! . . . tell me the truth, for the love of God!

MELISANDA.

Why have I not told you the truth?

GOLAUD.

Do not lie thus in the hour of death!

MELISANDA.

Who is going to die?—Is it I?

GOLAUD.

You, you! and I, I too, after you! . . . And we must have the truth . . . We must at last

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

have the truth, do you hear? . . . Tell me all!
Tell me all! I forgive you all! . . .

MELISANDA.

Why am I going to die? I did not know . . .

GOLAUD.

You know it now! . . . It is time! It is
time! Quick! quick! . . . The truth! the
truth! . . .

MELISANDA.

The truth . . . the truth . . .

GOLAUD.

Where are you? Melisanda! Where are
you? This is not natural! Melisanda! Where
are you? Where are you going? [*Perceiving*
ARKËL and the DOCTOR at the door of the
room.] Yes, yes; you can come in . . . I know
nothing; it is useless . . . It is too late; she
is already too far from us . . . I shall never

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA. Act v.

know! . . . I shall die here like a blind man! . . .

ARKËL.

What have you done? You will kill her . . .

GOLAUD.

I have already killed her . . .

ARKËL.

Melisanda . . .

MELISANDA.

Is that you, grandfather?

ARKËL.

Yes, my daughter . . . What would you like me to do?

MELISANDA.

Is it true that winter is here?

ARKËL.

Why do you ask it?

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

MELISANDA.

Because it is cold and there are no leaves left . . .

ARKËL.

Are you cold?—Would you like to have the windows shut?

MELISANDA.

No, no . . . not until the sun is deep in the sea.—He is going down slowly; then it is true that winter has begun?

ARKËL.

Yes.—Don't you like the winter?

MELISANDA.

Oh! no. I am frightened of the cold.—I am so frightened of the great cold . . .

ARKËL.

Do you feel better?

MELISANDA.

Yes, yes; I no longer feel all those anxieties . . .

ARKËL.

Would you like to see your child?

MELISANDA.

What child?

ARKËL.

Your child.—You are a mother . . . You have brought a little girl into the world . . .

MELISANDA.

Where is she?

ARKËL.

Here . . .

MELISANDA.

It is strange . . . I cannot lift my arms to take her . . .

ARKËL.

That is because you are still very weak . . .
I will hold her myself; look . . .

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

MELISANDA.

She is not smiling . . . She is little . . . She
is going to cry too . . . I pity her . . .

[*The room is invaded, little
by little, by the maid-
servants, who range
themselves in silence
along the walls and
wait.*]

GOLAUD [*rising abruptly*].

What is it?—What are all these women doing
here? . . .

THE DOCTOR.

They are the servants . . .

ARKËL.

Who called for them?

THE DOCTOR.

It was not I . . .

GOLAUD.

Why have you come here?—Nobody asked for you . . . What are you doing here?—But what is it then?—Answer! . . .

[*The servants answer nothing.*]

ARKËL

Don't speak too loud . . . She is going to sleep; she has closed her eyes . . .

GOLAUD.

This is not . . . ?

THE DOCTOR.

No, no; see, she breathes . . .

ARKËL

Her eyes are full of tears.—It is now her soul that weeps . . . Why is she spreading out her arms?—What does she want?

THE DOCTOR.

It is towards the child, no doubt. It is the mother's struggle against . . .

Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

GOLAUD.

Now?—now?—You must say it, speak!
speak! . . .

THE DOCTOR.

Perhaps.

GOLAUD.

At once? . . . Oh! Oh! I must tell her . . .
Melisanda! Melisanda! . . . Leave me! leave
me alone with her! . . .

ARKËL.

No, no; come no nearer . . . Do not trouble
her . . . Do not speak to her again . . . You
know not what the soul is . . .

GOLAUD.

It is not my fault . . . It is not my fault.

ARKËL.

Hush . . . Hush . . . We must speak in
whispers, now.—We must trouble her no more . . .
The human soul is very silent . . . The human
soul likes to slip away in solitude . . . It suffers
so timidly . . . But the sadness, Golaud . . .

but the sadness of all that one sees! . . . Oh!
oh! oh! . . .

[Here all the servants fall suddenly on to their knees at the end of the room.]

ARKËL [*turning*].

What is it?

THE DOCTOR [*approaching the bed and touching the body*].

They are right . . .

[Long silence.]

ARKËL.

I saw nothing.—Are you sure? . . .

THE DOCTOR.

Yes, yes.

ARKËL.

I heard nothing . . . So swiftly, so swiftly . . .
All at once . . . She has gone away without a
word . . .

GOLAUD [*sobbing*].

Oh! oh! oh!

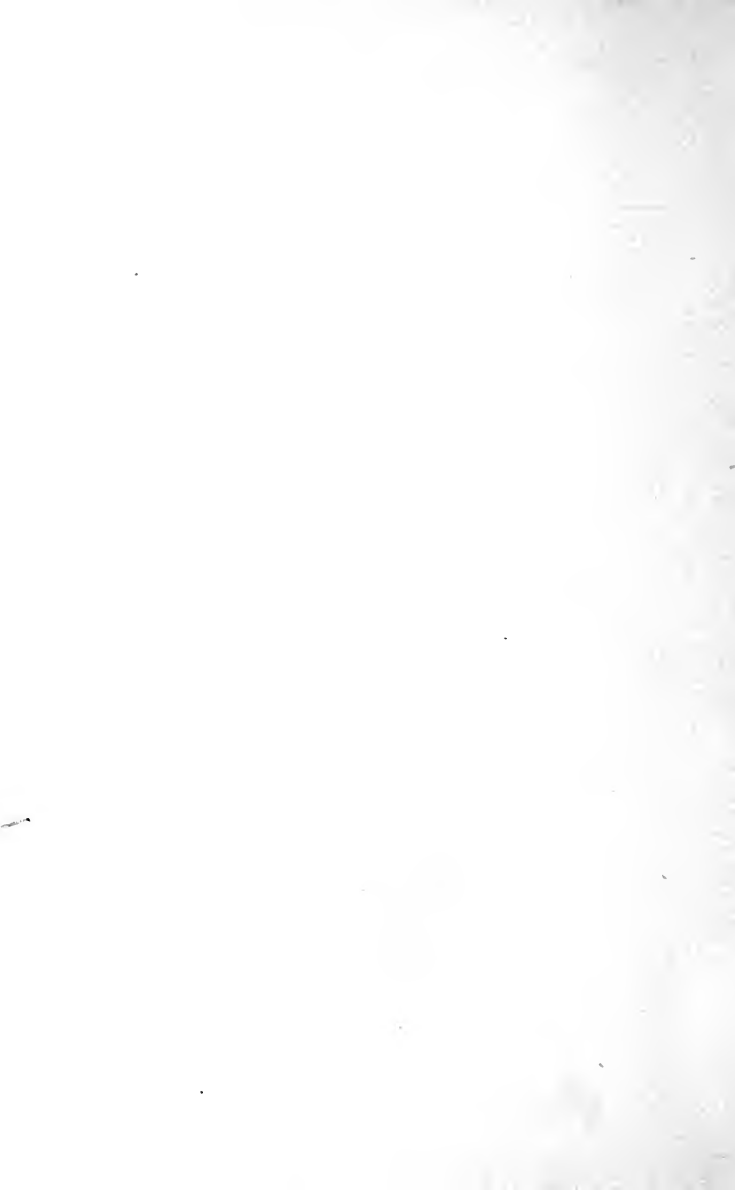
Sc. ii. PELLEAS AND MELISANDA.

ARKËL.

Do not stay here, Golaud . . . She needs silence, now . . . Come, come . . . It is terrible, but it is not your fault . . . It was a little gentle being, so quiet, so timid, and so silent . . . It was a poor little mysterious being, like all the world . . . She lies there as if she were her own child's big sister . . . Come, come . . . O God! O God! . . . I too shall understand none of it . . . Let us go from here. Come; the child must not stay here, in this room . . . It must live now, in her stead . . . The poor little one's turn has come . . .

[Exeunt in silence.]

[THE END.]



The Sightless.

Persons.

THE PRIEST.

THREE THAT WERE BORN BLIND.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

THE FIFTH BLIND MAN.

THE SIXTH BLIND MAN.

THREE OLD BLIND WOMEN PRAYING.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN

A YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

A MAD BLIND WOMAN.

THE SIGHTLESS.

A very ancient northern forest, eternal of aspect, beneath a sky profoundly starred.—In the midst, and towards the depths of night, a very old priest is seated wrapped in a wide black cloak. His head and the upper part of his body, slightly thrown back and mortally still, are leaning against the bole of an oak tree, huge and cavernous. His face is fearfully pale and of an inalterable waxen lividity; his violet lips are parted. His eyes, dumb and fixed, no longer gaze at the visible side of eternity, and seem bleeding beneath a multitude of immemorial sorrows and of tears. His hair, of a most solemn white, falls in stiff and scanty locks upon a face more illumined and more weary than all else that surrounds it in the intent silence of the gloomy forest. His hands, extremely lean, are rigidly clasped on his lap.—To the right, six old blind men are seated upon stones, the stumps of trees, and dead leaves.—To the left, separated from them by an uprooted tree and fragments of rock, six women, blind also, are seated facing the old

THE SIGHTLESS.

men. Three of them are praying and wailing in hollow voice and without pause. Another is extremely old. The fifth, in an attitude of mute insanity, holds on her knees a little child asleep. The sixth is strangely young, and her hair inundates her whole being. The women, as well as the old men, are clothed in ample garments, sombre and uniform. Most of them sit waiting with their elbows on their knees and their faces between their hands; and all seem to have lost the habit of useless gesture, and no longer turn their heads at the stifled and restless noises of the island. Great funereal trees, yews, weeping willows, cypresses, enwrap them in their faithful shadows. Not far from the priest, a cluster of long and sickly daffodils blossoms in the night. It is extraordinarily dark in spite of the moonlight that here and there strives to dispel for a while the gloom of the foliage.

FIRST BLIND MAN;

Is he not coming yet?

SECOND BLIND MAN.

You have waked me!

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I was asleep too.

THE SIGHTLESS.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

I was asleep too.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Is he not coming yet?

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I hear nothing coming.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

It must be about time to go back to the asylum.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

We want to know where we are!

SECOND BLIND MAN.

It has grown cold since he left.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

We want to know where we are!

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

Does any one know where we are?

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

We were walking a very long time ; we must be very far from the asylum.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Ah ! the women are opposite us ?

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

We are sitting opposite you.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Wait, I will come next to you. [*He rises and gropes about.*] Where are you ? Speak ! that I may hear where you are !

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

Here ; we are sitting on stones.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

[*He steps forward, stumbling against the fallen tree and the rocks.*]

There is something between us . . .

SECOND BLIND MAN.

It is better to stay where one is !

THE SIGHTLESS.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

Where are you sitting? Do you want to come over to us?

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

We dare not stand up!

THIRD BLIND MAN.

Why did he separate us?

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I hear praying on the women's side

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Yes; the three old women are praying.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

This is not the time to pray!

SECOND BLIND MAN.

You can pray by-and-by in the dormitory!

[*The three old women continue their prayers.*]

THE SIGHTLESS.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

I should like to know next to whom I am sitting?

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I think I am next you.

*[They grope about them
with their hands.]*

THIRD BLIND MAN.

We cannot touch each other.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

And yet we are not far apart. *[He gropes about him, and with his stick hits the fifth blind man, who gives a dull moan.]* The one who cannot hear is sitting next us.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I don't hear everybody; we were six just now.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I am beginning to make things out. Let us question the women too; it is necessary that

THE SIGHTLESS.

we should know how matters stand. I still hear the three old women praying; are they sitting together?

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

They are sitting beside me, on a rock.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I am sitting on dead leaves!

THIRD BLIND MAN.

And the beauty, where is she?

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

She is near those that are praying.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Where are the mad woman and her child?

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

He is asleep; don't wake him!

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Oh! how far from us you are! I thought you were just opposite me!

THE SIGHTLESS.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

We know, more or less, all that we need know; let us talk a little, till the priest comes back.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

He told us to await him in silence.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

We are not in a church.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

You don't know where we are.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

I feel frightened when I am not talking.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Do you know where the priest has gone?

THIRD BLIND MAN.

It seems to me that he is leaving us alone too long.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

He is growing too old. It appears that he has hardly been able to see for some time him-

THE SIGHTLESS.

self. He will not own it, for fear that another should come and take his place among us; but I suspect that he can hardly see any more. We ought to have another guide; he never listens to us now, and we are becoming too many for him. The three nuns and he are the only ones in the house that can see; and they are all older than we are!—I am sure that he has led us astray, and is trying to find the way again. Where can he have gone?—He has no right to leave us here . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

He has gone very far; I think he said so to the women.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Then he only speaks to the women now?—Do we not exist any more?—We shall have to complain in the end!

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

To whom will you carry your complaint?

THE SIGHTLESS.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I don't yet know; we shall see, we shall see.—
But where can he have gone?—I am asking it
of the women.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

He was tired, having walked so long. I think
he sat down a moment in our midst. He has
been very sad and very weak for some days.
He has been uneasy since the doctor died. He
is lonely. He hardly ever speaks. I don't know
what can have happened. He insisted on going
out to-day. He said he wanted to see the Island
one last time, in the sun, before winter came. It
appears that the winter will be very cold and
very long, and that ice is already coming down
from the north. He was anxious too; they say
that the great storms of these last days have
swelled the stream, and that all the dykes are
giving way. He said too that the sea frightened
him; it appears to be agitated for no reason,
and the cliffs of the Island are not high enough.

THE SIGHTLESS.

He wanted to see for himself; but he did not tell us what he saw.—I think he has gone now to fetch some bread and water for the mad woman. He said that he would perhaps have to go very far. We shall have to wait.

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

He took my hands on leaving; and his hands trembled as if he were afraid. Then he kissed me . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Oh! oh!

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

I asked him what had happened. He told me that he did not know what was going to happen. He told me that the old men's reign was coming to an end, perhaps . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

What did he mean by that?

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

I did not understand him. He told me that he was going towards the great lighthouse.

THE SIGHTLESS.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Is there a lighthouse here?

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

Yes, north of the Island. I think we are not far from it. He told me that he could see the light of the beacon falling here, upon the leaves. He never seemed to me sadder than to-day, and I think that for some days he had been crying. I don't know why, but I cried too, without seeing him. I did not hear him go. I did not question him further. I could hear that he was smiling too solemnly; I could hear that he was closing his eyes and wished for silence . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

He said nothing to us of all this!

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

You never listen to him when he speaks!

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

You all murmur when he speaks!

THE SIGHTLESS.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

He merely said "Good-night" on leaving.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

It must be very late.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

He said "Good-night" two or three times on leaving, as if he were going to sleep. I could hear that he was looking at me when he said, "Good-night; good-night."—The voice changes when one looks at some one fixedly.

FIFTH BLIND MAN.

Have pity on those that cannot see!

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Who is talking in that senseless way?

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I think it is the one who cannot hear.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Be quiet!—this is not the time to beg!

THE SIGHTLESS.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

Where was he going for the bread and water?

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

He went towards the sea.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

One does not walk towards the sea in that way at his age!

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Are we near the sea?

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

Yes; be quiet an instant; you will hear it.

*[A murmur of the sea
near at hand and
very calm against the
cliffs.]*

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I only hear the three old women praying.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

Listen well, you will hear it through their prayers.

THE SIGHTLESS.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Yes; I hear something that is not far from us.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

It was asleep; it seems as if it were waking.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

It was wrong of him to lead us here; I don't like hearing that noise.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

You know very well that the Island is not large, and that one can hear it as soon as ever one leaves the walls of the asylum.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I never listened to it.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

It seems to me that it is next us to-day; I don't like hearing it so close.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Nor I; besides, we never asked to leave the asylum.

THE SIGHTLESS.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

We have never been as far as this ; it was useless to bring us so far.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

It was very fine this morning ; he wanted us to enjoy the last days of sunshine, before shutting us up for the whole winter in the asylum . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

But I prefer staying in the asylum !

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

He said too that we ought to know something of the little Island we live in. He himself has never been all over it ; there is a mountain that no one has climbed, valleys which no one likes to go down to, and caves that have not been entered to this day. He said, in short, that one must not always sit waiting for the sun under the dormitory roof ; he wanted to bring us to the sea-shore. He has gone there alone.

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

He is right ; one must think of living.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

But there is nothing to see out of doors !

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Are we in the sun, now ?

THIRD BLIND MAN.

Is the sun still shining ?

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

I think not ; it seems to me to be very late.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

What o'clock is it ?

THE OTHERS.

I don't know.—Nobody knows.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Is it still light ? [*To the sixth blind man.*]

Where are you ?—Come, you who can see a little, come !

THE SIGHTLESS.

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

I think it is very dark ; when the sun shines, I see a blue line under my eyelids ; I saw one a long while ago ; but now I can see nothing at all.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

As for me, I know that it is late when I am hungry, and I am hungry.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

But look up at the sky ; you will see some thing, perhaps !

[They all lift their heads towards the sky, save the three that were born blind, who continue to look on the ground.]

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

I don't know that we are under the sky.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Our voices resound as if they were in a cave.

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

I rather think they resound so because it is evening.

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

It seems to me that I feel the moonlight on my hands.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

I think there are stars ; I hear them.

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

I too.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I can hear no sound.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I can only hear the sound of our breathing !

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

I think the women are right.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I never heard the stars.

THE SIGHTLESS.

SECOND AND THIRD BLIND MEN.

Neither did I.

[A flight of night-birds alights suddenly amidst the foliage.]

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Listen ! listen !—What is that above us?—Do you hear ?

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

Something passed between the sky and us.

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

There is something moving above our heads ; but we cannot reach it !

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I don't know the nature of that sound.—I want to go back to the asylum.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

We want to know where we are !

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

I have tried to stand up ; there are thorns,

THE SIGHTLESS.

nothing but thorns about me; I dare not spread my hands out any more.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

We want to know where we are!

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

We cannot know it!

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

We must be very far from the house; I can no longer make out a single noise.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

For a long while, I have smelt the smell of dead leaves.

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

Did any one of us see the Island in past days, and could he tell us where we are?

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

We were all blind when we came here.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

We have never been able to see.

THE SIGHTLESS.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Let us not be unnecessarily anxious; he will soon return; let us wait a little longer; but in future, we will not go out with him again.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

We cannot go out alone!

FIRST BLIND MAN.

We will not go out at all, I prefer not going out.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

We had no wish to go out, nobody had asked to do so.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

It was a holiday on the Island; we always go out on great holidays.

THIRD BLIND WOMAN.

He came and hit me on the shoulder when I was still asleep, saying: Get up, get up, it is time, the sun is shining!—Was there any sun? I was not aware of it. I have never seen the sun.

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

I saw the sun when I was very young.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

I too ; it was long ago ; when I was a child ; but I hardly remember it now.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

Why does he want us to go out every time the sun shines? Which of us is any the wiser? I never know whether I am walking out at midday or at midnight.

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

I prefer going out at midday ; I suspect great brightness then, and my eyes make great efforts to open.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

I prefer staying in the refectory by the coal-fire ; there was a big fire there this morning . . .

SECOND BLIND MAN.

He could bring us out into the sun in the yard ; there one has the shelter of the walls ;

THE SIGHTLESS.

one cannot get out, there is nothing to fear when the door is shut.—I always shut it.—Why did you touch my left elbow?

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I did not touch you; I cannot reach you.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I tell you that somebody touched my elbow.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

It was none of us.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I want to go away!

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

O God! O God! tell us where we are!

FIRST BLIND MAN.

We cannot wait here for ever!

*[A very distant clock
strikes twelve very
slowly.]*

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

Oh! how far we are from the asylum!

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

It is midnight!

SECOND BLIND MAN.

It is midday!—Does any one know?—Speak!

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

I don't know. But I think we are in the shade.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I can make nothing out; we slept too long.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I am hungry.

THE OTHERS.

We are hungry and thirsty!

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Have we been here long?

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

It seems to me that I have been here centuries!

THE SIGHTLESS.

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

I am beginning to make out where we are . . .

THIRD BLIND MAN.

We ought to go towards where midnight struck.

[*All the night-birds exult suddenly in the gloom.*]

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Do you hear?—Do you hear?

SECOND BLIND MAN.

We are not alone!

THIRD BLIND MAN.

I have had my suspicions for a long time; we are being overheard.—Has he come back?

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I don't know what it is; it is above us.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Did the others hear nothing?—You are always silent!

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

We are still listening.

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

I hear wings about me!

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

O God! O God! tell us where we are!

THE SIXTH BLIND MAN.

I am beginning to make out where we are . . . The asylum is on the other side of the big river; we have crossed the old bridge. He has brought us to the north side of the Island. We are not far from the river, and perhaps we should hear it if we were to listen a moment . . . We shall have to go down to the edge of the water, if he does not come back . . . Night and day great ships pass there, and the sailors will see us standing on the banks. It may be that we are in the forest that surrounds the lighthouse; but I don't know the way out of it . . . Is somebody willing to follow me?

THE SIGHTLESS.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Let us keep seated!—Let us wait, let us wait;—we don't know the direction of the big river, and there are bogs all round the asylum; let us wait, let us wait . . . He will come back; he is bound to come back!

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

Does any one know which way we came here? He explained it to us as we walked.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I paid no attention.

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

Did any one listen to him?

THIRD BLIND MAN.

We must listen to him in future.

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

Was any one of us born on the Island?

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

You know quite well that we come from elsewhere.

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

We come from the other side of the sea.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I thought I should have died crossing.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I too ;—we came together.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

We are all three of the same parish.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

They say that one can see it from here in clear weather ;—towards the north.—It has no steeple.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

We landed by chance.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

I come from another direction . . .

SECOND BLIND MAN.

From where do you come ?

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

I no longer dare think of it . . . I can hardly call it to mind when I speak of it . . . It was too long ago . . . It was colder there than here . . .

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

And I, I come from very far . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Where do you come from then?

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

I could not tell you. How should I be able to describe it?—It is too far from here; it is beyond the seas. I come from a big country . . . I could only explain it to you by signs, and we cannot see . . . I have wandered too long . . . But I have seen the sun and water and fire, and mountains, and faces and strange flowers . . . There are none like them on this Island; it is too dismal here and too cold . . . I have never known the scent again, since I lost my sight . . . But I saw my

THE SIGHTLESS.

parents and my sisters . . . I was too young then to know where I was . . . I still played about on the sea-shore . . . Yet how well I remember having seen! . . . One day, I looked at the snow from the top of a mountain . . . I was just beginning to distinguish those that are to be unhappy . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

What do you mean?

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

I can still distinguish them by the sound of their voice at times . . . I have memories that are clearer when I am not thinking of them . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I have no memories, I . . .

*[A flight of big birds of passage
passes clamouring above
the foliage.]*

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

There is something passing again beneath the sky!

THE SIGHTLESS.

SECOND BLIND MAN,

Why did you come here?

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN,

To whom are you speaking?

SECOND BLIND MAN,

To our young sister.

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

They had told me that he could cure me. He says that I shall see again some day; then I shall be able to leave the Island . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN,

We should all like to leave the Island!

SECOND BLIND MAN.

We shall stay here for ever!

THIRD BLIND MAN.

He is too old; he will never have time to cure us!

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

My eyelids are closed, but I feel that my eyes are alive . . .

THE SIGHTLESS.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Mine are open . . .

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I sleep with my eyes open.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

Let us not speak of our eyes!

SECOND BLIND MAN.

You have not been here long?

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

One evening, during prayers, I heard on the women's side a voice I did not know; and I could tell by your voice that you were young . . . I wanted to see you, having heard your voice . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I never noticed it.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

He never lets us know anything!

THE SIGHTLESS.

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

They say that you are beautiful, like some woman come from afar?

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

I have never seen myself.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

We have never seen each other. We question each other, and we answer each other; we live together, we are always together, but we know not what we are! . . . It is all very well to touch each other with both hands; eyes know more than hands . . .

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

I see your shadows sometimes when you are in the sun . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

We have never seen the house in which we live; it is all very well to touch the walls and the windows; we know nothing of where we live . . .

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

They say it is an old castle, very gloomy and very wretched, one never sees a light there, save in the tower where the priest's room is.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Those who cannot see need no light.

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

When I am keeping the flocks, round about the asylum, the sheep go home of themselves when, at evening, they see that light in the tower . . . They have never led me astray.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

For years and years we have lived together and we have never beheld each other! One would say we were always alone! . . . One must see to love . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

I sometimes dream that I can see . . .

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

I only see when I am dreaming . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I only dream, as a rule, at midnight.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Of what can one dream when one's hands are motionless?

[*A squall shakes the forest,
and the leaves fall in
dismal showers.*]

FIFTH BLIND MAN.

Who was it touched my hands?

FIRST BLIND MAN.

There is something falling round us.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

It comes from above; I don't know what it is . . .

FIFTH BLIND MAN.

Who was it touched my hands?—I was asleep; let me sleep!

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

Nobody touched your hands.

FIFTH BLIND MAN.

Who was it took my hands? Answer loud,
I am rather hard of hearing . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

We don't ourselves know.

FIFTH BLIND MAN.

Have they come to warn us?

FIRST BLIND MAN.

It is of no use answering; he can hear
nothing.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

It must be admitted that the deaf are very
unfortunate!

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

I am tired of sitting down!

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

I am tired of being here!

THE SIGHTLESS.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

We seem to me so far from one another . . .
Let us try to draw a little closer together ;—it
is beginning to be cold . . .

THIRD BLIND MAN.

I dare not stand up! It is better to stay
where one is.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

There is no knowing what there may be
between us.

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

I think both my hands are bleeding; I
wanted to stand up.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

I can hear that you are leaning towards me.

*[The blind mad woman rubs
her eyes violently, moaning,
and persistently turning
towards the motionless
priest.]*

THE SIGHTLESS.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I hear another noise . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

I think it is our poor sister rubbing her eyes.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

She never does anything else; I hear her every night.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

She is mad; she never says anything.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

She has never spoken since she had her child. She seems always to be afraid . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

Are you not afraid here then?

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Who?

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

All the rest of us!

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

Yes, yes, we are afraid!

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

We have been afraid a long time!

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Why do you ask that?

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

I don't know why I ask it! . . . There is something I cannot make out . . . It seems as if I heard a sudden sound of crying in our midst! . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

It does not do to be afraid; I think it is the mad woman . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

There is something else besides . . . I am sure there is something else besides . . . It is not only that which frightens me . . .

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

She always cries when she is about to suckle her child.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

She is the only one that cries so!

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

They say that she can still see at times . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

One never hears the others cry . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

One must see to weep . . .

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

I smell a scent of flowers round about us . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I only smell the smell of the earth!

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

There are flowers, there are flowers near us!

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I only smell the smell of the earth!

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

I have just smelt flowers on the wind . . .

THIRD BLIND MAN.

I only smell the smell of the earth!

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

I think the women are right.

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

Where are they?—I will go and pick them.

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

To your right, stand up.

[The sixth blind man rises slowly, and, knocking himself against trees and bushes, gropes his way towards the daffodils, which he treads down and crushes as he goes.]

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

I can hear that you are snapping green stems!

Stop! stop!

THE SIGHTLESS.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Never mind about the flowers, but think about getting back!

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

I dare not retrace my steps!

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

You must not come back!—Wait.—[*She rises.*]—Oh! how cold the earth is! It is going to freeze.—[*She moves without hesitation towards the strange pale daffodils, but she is stopped by the fallen tree and the rocks, in the neighbourhood of the flowers.*]—They are here!—I cannot reach them; they are on your side.

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

I think I am picking them.

[*Groping about him, he picks what flowers are left, and offers them to her; the night-birds fly away.*]

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

It seems to me that I once saw these flowers . . .

THE SIGHTLESS.

I have forgotten their name . . . But how ill they are, and how limp their stalks are! I hardly know them again . . . I think they are the flowers of the dead . . .

[She plaits the daffodils in her hair.]

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

I hear the sound of your hair.

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

Those are the flowers . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

We shall not see you . . .

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

I shall not see myself . . . I am cold.

[At this moment, the wind rises in the forest and the sea roars suddenly and with violence against the neighbouring cliffs.]

FIRST BLIND MAN.

It is thundering!

THE SIGHTLESS.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I think it is a storm rising.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

I think it is the sea.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

The sea?—Is it the sea?—But it is at two steps from us!—It is beside us! I hear it all round me!—It must be something else!

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

I hear the sound of waves at my feet.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I think it is the wind in the dead leaves.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

I think the women are right.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

It will be coming here!

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Where does the wind come from?

THE SIGHTLESS.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

It comes from the sea.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

It always comes from the sea; the sea hems us in on all sides. It cannot come from elsewhere . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Let us not think of the sea any more!

SECOND BLIND MAN.

But we must think of it, as it is going to reach us!

FIRST BLIND MAN.

You don't know that it is the sea.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I hear its waves as if I were going to dip both hands in! We cannot stay here! They may be all around us!

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

Where do you want to go?

THE SIGHTLESS.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

No matter where! No matter where! I will not hear the sound of that water any more! Let us go! Let us go!

THIRD BLIND MAN.

It seems to me that I hear something else besides.—Listen!

[A sound of footsteps, swift and distant, is heard among the dead leaves.]

FIRST BLIND MAN.

There is something coming towards us!

SECOND BLIND MAN.

He is coming! He is coming! He is coming back!

THIRD BLIND MAN.

He is taking little steps, like a little child . . .

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Let us reproach him nothing to-day!

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

I think it is not the step of a man!

[A big dog enters the forest and passes before them.—Silence.]

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Who is there?—Who are you?—Have pity on us, we have been waiting so long! . . . *[The dog stops, and returning, lays his front paws on the blind man's knees.]* Ah! ah! what have you put on my knees? What is it? . . . Is it an animal? I think it is a dog? . . . Oh! oh! it is the dog! it is the dog from the asylum! Come here! come here! He has come to deliver us! Come here! come here!

THE OTHERS.

Come here! come here!

FIRST BLIND MAN.

He has come to deliver us! He has followed our traces! He is licking my hands as if he had found me after hundreds of years! He is

THE SIGHTLESS.

howling for joy! He will die of joy! Listen!
listen!

THE OTHERS.

Come here! come here!

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

He has perhaps run on in front of somebody? . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

No, no, he is alone.—I hear nothing coming.—We need no other guide; there is none better. He will lead us wherever we want to go; he will obey us . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

I dare not follow him.

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

Nor I.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Why not? He sees better than we do.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Let us not listen to the women!

THE SIGHTLESS.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

I think that something has changed in the sky ; I breathe freely ; the air is pure now . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

It is the sea-breeze that is blowing round us.

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

It seems to me that it is going to get light ; I think the sun is rising . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

I think it is going to be cold . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

We shall find the way. He is dragging me along. He is drunk with joy !—I can no longer hold him back ! . . . Follow me ! follow me ! We are going home ! . . .

[He rises, dragged along by the dog, who leads him towards the motionless priest, and there stops.]

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OTHERS.

Where are you? Where are you?—Where are you going? Take care!

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Wait! wait! Don't follow me yet; I will come back . . . He is standing still.—What is it?—Ah! ah! I have touched something very cold!

SECOND BLIND MAN.

What are you saying? I can hardly hear your voice any more.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I have touched . . . I think I am touching a face!

THIRD BLIND MAN.

What are you saying?—One can hardly understand you any more. What is the matter with you?—Where are you?—Are you already so far away from us?

THE SIGHTLESS.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Oh! oh! oh! I don't yet know what it is . . .—There is a dead man in our midst!

THE OTHERS.

A dead man in our midst?—Where are you? where are you?

FIRST BLIND MAN.

There is a dead man among us, I tell you! Oh! oh! I have touched a dead face!—You are sitting next to a dead body! One of us must have died suddenly! But speak then, that I may know which are alive! Where are you?—Answer! answer all together!

*[They answer in succession
save the mad woman and
the deaf man; the three
old women have ceased
praying.]*

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I can no longer distinguish your voices! . . .

THE SIGHTLESS.

You are all speaking alike! . . . They are all trembling!

THIRD BLIND MAN.

There are two who did not answer . . .
Where are they?

*[He touches with his stick
the fifth blind man.]*

FIFTH BLIND MAN.

Oh! oh! I was asleep; let me sleep!

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

It is not he.—Is it the mad woman?

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

She is sitting next me; I can hear her
live . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I think . . . I think it is the priest!—He is
standing! Come! come! come!

SECOND BLIND MAN.

He is standing?

THE SIGHTLESS.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

Then he is not dead!

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN

Where is he?

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

Come and see! . . .

*[They all rise, save the
mad woman and
the fifth blind man,
and grope their way
towards the dead.]*

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Is he here?—Is it he?

THIRD BLIND MAN.

Yes! yes! I recognise him!

FIRST BLIND MAN.

O God! O God! what is to become of us!

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

Father! father!—Is it you? Father, what

THE SIGHTLESS.

has happened?—What is the matter with you?
—Answer us!—We are all gathered round
you . . . Oh! oh! oh!

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

Bring some water; he is perhaps still
alive . . .

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Let us try . . . He will perhaps be able to
lead us back to the asylum . . .

THIRD BLIND MAN.

It is useless; I cannot hear his heart.—He is
cold . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

He died without a word.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

He ought to have warned us.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Oh! how old he was! . . . It is the first time
I ever touched his face . . .

THE SIGHTLESS.

THIRD BLIND MAN (*feeling the corpse*).

He is taller than we are! . . .

SECOND BLIND MAN.

His eyes are wide open ; he died with clasped hands . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

He died, so, for no reason . . .

SECOND BLIND MAN.

He is not standing, he is sitting on a stone . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

O God! O God! I did not know all . . . all! . . . He had been ill so long . . . He must have suffered to-day! Oh! oh! oh! —He never complained! . . . He only complained in pressing our hands . . . One does not always understand . . . One never understands! . . . Let us pray around him. Kneel down . . .

[*The women kneel, moaning.*]

THE SIGHTLESS.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I dare not kneel down . . .

SECOND BLIND MAN.

One does not know what one is kneeling on here . . .

THIRD BLIND MAN.

Was he ill? . . . He never told us . . .

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I heard him whisper something as he went . . .
I think he was speaking to our young sister ;
what did he say ?

FIRST BLIND MAN.

She will not answer.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

You will not answer us any more?—But
where are you then?—Speak!

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

You made him suffer too much ; you have
killed him . . . You would go no further ; you

THE SIGHTLESS.

wanted to sit down on the stones by the roadside to eat; you grumbled all day . . . I heard him sigh . . . He lost courage . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Was he ill? did you know it?

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

We knew nothing . . . We had never seen him . . . When have we ever known of anything that passed before our poor dead eyes? . . . He never complained . . . Now it is too late . . . I have seen three die . . . but never so . . . Now it is our turn . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

It is not I that made him suffer.—I never said anything . . .

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Nor I; we followed him without a word . . .

THIRD BLIND MAN.

He died going to fetch water for the mad woman . . .

THE SIGHTLESS.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

What are we to do now? Where shall we go?

THIRD BLIND MAN.

Where is the dog?

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Here; he will not leave the dead.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

Drag him away! Drive him off! drive him off!

FIRST BLIND MAN.

He will not leave the dead!

SECOND BLIND MAN.

We cannot wait beside a dead man! . . . We cannot die thus in the dark!

THIRD BLIND MAN.

Let us keep together; let us not move away from one another; let us hold hands; let us all sit down on this stone . . . Where are the others? Come here! come! come!

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

Where are you?

THIRD BLIND MAN.

Here; I am here. Are we all together?—
Come nearer to me. Where are your hands?
—It is very cold.

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

Oh! how cold your hands are!

THIRD BLIND MAN.

What are you doing?

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

I was putting my hands to my eyes. I
thought I was going to see all at once . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Who is that crying?

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

It is the mad woman sobbing.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Yet she does not know the truth?

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

I think we shall die here . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

Some one will come perhaps . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

Who else would be likely to come? . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

I don't know.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I think the nuns will come out of the
asylum . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

They never go out of an evening.

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

They never go out at all.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I think that the men from the big lighthouse
will see us . . .

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

They never come down from their tower.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

They might see us . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

They are always looking towards the sea.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

It is cold!

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

Listen to the dead leaves; I think it is
freezing.

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

Oh! how hard the earth is!

THIRD BLIND MAN.

I hear to my left a noise that I cannot make
out . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

It is the sea moaning against the rocks.

THE SIGHTLESS.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

I thought it was the women.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

I hear the ice breaking under the waves . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Who is it that is shivering so? he is making us all shake on the stone!

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I can no longer open my hands.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

I hear another noise that I cannot make out . . .

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Which of us is it that is shivering so? He is shaking the stone!

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

I think it is a woman.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

I think the mad woman is shivering most.

THE SIGHTLESS.

THIRD BLIND MAN.

I cannot hear her child.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

I think he is still sucking.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

He is the only one that can see where we are!

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I hear the north wind.

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

I think there are no more stars; it is going to snow.

SECOND BLIND MAN.

Then we are lost!

THIRD BLIND MAN.

If one of us falls asleep he must be waked.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

I am sleepy though.

*[A squall makes the dead
leaves whirl.]*

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

Do you hear the dead leaves? I think some one is coming towards us!

SECOND BLIND MAN.

It is the wind; listen!

THIRD BLIND MAN.

No one will come now!

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

The great cold is coming . . .

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

I hear some one walking in the distance!

FIRST BLIND MAN.

I only hear the dead leaves!

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

I hear some one walking very far from us!

SECOND BLIND MAN.

I only hear the north wind.

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

I tell you that some one is coming towards us!

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

I hear a sound of very slow footsteps . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

I think the women are right.

*[It begins to snow in great
flakes.]*

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Oh! oh! what is that falling so cold on my
hands?

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

It is snowing!

FIRST BLIND MAN.

Let us draw up close to one another!

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

But listen to the sound of the footsteps!

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

For God's sake! be still an instant!

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

They are drawing nearer! they are drawing nearer! listen then!

[Here the mad woman's child begins to wail suddenly in the dark.]

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

The child is crying!

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

It sees! it sees! It must see something as it is crying! *[She seizes the child in her arms and moves forward in the direction whence the sound of footsteps seems to come; the other women follow her anxiously and surround her.]* I am going to meet it!

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

Take care!

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

Oh! how he is crying!—What is it?—Don't cry.—Don't be afraid; there is nothing to be

THE SIGHTLESS.

afraid of; we are here all about you.—What do you see?—Fear nothing!—Don't cry so!—What is it that you see?—Tell us, what is it that you see?

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

The sound of footsteps is drawing nearer; listen! listen!

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

I hear the rustling of a dress among the dead leaves.

SIXTH BLIND MAN.

Is it a woman?

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

Is it the sound of footsteps?

FIRST BLIND MAN.

It is perhaps the sea on the dead leaves?

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

No, no! they are footsteps! they are footsteps! they are footsteps!

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

We shall soon know; listen to the dead leaves.

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

I hear them, I hear them, almost beside us! listen! listen!—What is it that you see? What is it that you see?

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

Which way is he looking?

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

He always follows the sound of the footsteps!—Look! Look! When I turn him away he turns back to look . . . He sees! he sees! he sees!—He must see something strange! . . .

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN [*coming forward*].

Lift him above us, that he may see.

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

Step aside! step aside! [*She lifts the child above the group of the sightless.*] The footsteps have stopped right among us! . . .

THE SIGHTLESS.

THE OLDEST BLIND MAN.

They are here! They are here in our midst!

THE YOUNG BLIND WOMAN.

Who are you?

[*Silence.*]

THE OLDEST BLIND WOMAN.

Have pity on us!

[*Silence. The child cries
more desperately.*]

THE END.

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